

Running head: THE POLITICS OF TEACHING FINANCIAL LITERACY EDUCATION

The Politics of Teaching Financial Literacy Education:
A Case Study of Critical High School Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Ontario and Québec

Agata Soroko

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Faculty of Education
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1 Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Teachers' voices have been largely excluded from the academic and political debates regarding the aims and merits of financial literacy education. Through case study research, this project examined the beliefs, practices, and lives of 10 teachers in Québec and Ontario who teach financial literacy at the intermediate and senior levels. Specifically, the teachers in this study report taking a critical approach to financial literacy education—a subject that tends to be framed in simplistic and individualistic terms as mere personal financial decision-making. In an analysis of in-depth interviews and deliberative inquiry focus groups with self-identifying critical teachers and investigation into various documentary sources, I detail the ways in which some of these teachers adhere to mainstream understandings of financial literacy education while others work to reframe it towards more critical and economically just ends. This research results in the development of a framework for critical economic literacy education, documenting the intellectually demanding set of skills, knowledge, and pedagogical strategies a critical economic literacy requires of students and teachers. Findings also bring forth distinctions in teachers' ideas about criticality, revealing that teachers navigate between common, critical, and transformative sense orientations in sophisticated ways to achieve their pedagogical aims. Last, I investigate how criticality emerges in teachers, narrating the ways in which their personal biographies, professional and political activities, and intellectual pursuits inform their critical teaching in relation to financial literacy. This case study is further contextualized by the current political moment in which escalating economic inequality and the widening racial wealth gap, the current financial crisis, impending climate disasters, and antidemocratic politics worldwide convey a sense of urgency and a timely relevance for a more critical and transformative financial literacy education.

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Chapter One: Introduction to Financial Literacy Education and the Study

In order for us as poor and oppressed people to become a part of a society that is meaningful, the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed. This means that we are going to have to learn to think in radical terms. I use the term radical in its original meaning—getting down to and understanding the root cause. It means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you change that system.

– Ella Baker, *The Black Woman in the Civil Rights Struggle*

I wrote a considerable part of this dissertation in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. In the months following the public health crisis and the economic collapse, it dawned on those of us concerned with justice that the only good to result from the catastrophes wrought by the virus across the globe was a reckoning with the fact that we could not return to the world we knew before. Nothing made this lesson more apparent than COVID-19's twin pandemic of racism, which—thanks to the efforts of the Black Lives Matter activists and their predecessors—brought to the fore the collective task ahead of dismantling white supremacy and building a new normal. Writing in such extraordinary times, it is fitting that at the heart of this dissertation is a story about extraordinary teachers—teachers who have long refused to sustain the status quo, teachers who have been disrupting business-as-usual long before the novel coronavirus made its first deadly appearance. In their resistance to neoliberal reforms, pursuit of justice and equity, and commitment to intellectually demanding and imaginative teaching, the educators in this study work daily in quest of a future more just than the one unfolding before their students today.

A vision for a better tomorrow was a leitmotif throughout the course of this research. Much of the data collection and the writing of this dissertation took place against the backdrop of daily media stories about antidemocratic governments rising to power worldwide, growing economic inequality, looming climate emergencies and the COVID-19 pandemic, its ensuing financial crash, and the Black Lives Matter protests against anti-Black racism and the carceral state in the final stages of the study. When I first began data collection, however, it was amidst the global protest wave of 2019. Demonstrations were sweeping the world over, from Chile where citizens, initially middle and high schools students, marched for economic reform and equality to the streets of Hong Kong where protesters fought for freedom and democracy (Diehl, 2019).

Locally, major shifts were also occurring in the two Canadian provinces that are the focus of this study, which I detail in the next chapter. In Ontario, the provincial government led by Premier Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative party was either reducing or entirely removing an overwhelming amount of environmental, health, education, arts, research, and social programs, including cutting funding to children's aid societies, eliminating free tuition for low-income postsecondary students, and cutting public school teaching positions (Star Staff, 2019). In Québec, the Coalition Avenir Québec led by François Legault introduced and passed xenophobic laws targeting immigrant populations and Muslim Canadians—and largely affecting public school teachers—that were camouflaged as concern over state secularism, patriotism, and free speech (Leavitt, 2019; Lindeman, 2019; Stevenson, 2019). All were met with public outcry and protest.

As these global and local political events unfolded, they dramatized the themes that were beginning to surface from the data collected for this project, both from my conversations with teachers and from the films, books, and other teaching resources that I reviewed. If at the outset I

had any reservations about this study's significance or the contribution it could make to the field, these concerns receded once I began speaking with teachers in the summer of 2019. During data analysis and follow-up interviews in the spring of 2020, any lingering doubts dissipated entirely. The themes that had been taking shape for months in my research came into sharp focus as the COVID-19 virus ravaged lives and disrupted livelihoods in my community and around the globe and later, in the summer of 2020, as communities worldwide fought for civil rights in the Black Lives Matter movement. These events underscored just how prescient, timely, and consequential were the concerns that teachers had been expressing to me over the course of this research, which I cover in Chapters Five and Six. First, however, I look to financial literacy education from another time.

Financial Literacy Lessons from an Earlier Era

Ella Baker, the great American civil rights leader, intellectual, and community organizer, was also a teacher of consumer education, financial literacy's predecessor, for the Workers Education Project¹ in the 1930s (Ransby, 2003). Baker worked to politicize young people by connecting consumer problems with major social issues of the day. Exposing "many young people to the world of books and ideas, she sought to instill in them a sense of their own power to think critically, analyze events, and articulate their opinions and beliefs" (Ransby, 2003, p. 70). On a flyer announcing one of her workshops, Baker posed the question: "Some consumers organize to save money, others to save the world—what does consumer education mean to you?" (Ransby, 2003, p. 94). Knowledge and education for Baker were not only a source of personal

¹ The Workers Education Project was part of the Works Progress Administration, one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal agencies set up during the Great Depression to combat massive unemployment through the creation of government funded jobs (Ransby, 2003, p. 91).

empowerment but also “tools in the struggle against oppression,” and she strived to ensure consumer education was available and accessible to Black American workers who otherwise may not have seen the relevance of such programs to their lives (Ransby, 2003, pp. 70, 94). In line with Baker’s beliefs about the American capitalist system’s injustices and the possibility of ordinary people’s collective power as consumers and workers to influence the economy and improve the conditions of their lives, her syllabi posed questions such as: “Why so much poverty in so rich a country as America?” and “What role can organized and dynamic consumer action play in issuing in a new social order?” (Ransby, 2003, pp. 94–95).

Though the topic of this dissertation is financial literacy education for students in secondary schools and not adult workers as was the case for Baker, juxtaposing them reveals a stark truth: mainstream financial literacy is a far cry from her radical vision of engaging young people in critical analyses of the social, political, and economic conditions affecting individuals’ life chances. Rather than teaching young people to develop the skills to act, in concert with others, on improving financial outcomes for all citizens, most financial literacy education programs teach individuals to look out only for their own best interests (Arthur, 2012a; Blue & Pinto, 2017; Hütten et al., 2018; Santos, 2017).

Despite the prevalence of individualistically oriented and uncritical financial literacy initiatives and programs, dissenting voices can be found. It is those voices that this project aimed to explore. My interest in teachers’ resistance to traditional modes of financial literacy education was kindled by news stories in which Canadian teachers were opposed to taking up financial literacy in their classrooms because it did not encourage critical thinking about capitalism and global finance (Valiante, 2017). I thus sought to conduct research with teachers whose ideas about financial literacy aligned more closely with those of Ella Baker than with the official

standards and expectations I had studied in curricular frameworks across Canada and the United States that positioned financial literacy education as mere personal finance instruction (Soroko, 2020). I was particularly curious about teachers because their voices have been largely missing from the academic and political debates regarding the aims, merits, and efficacy of financial literacy education. The case study presented in this dissertation is a result of these interests. It illuminates the thoughts, practices, and lives of 10 teachers who self-identify as taking a critical approach to the teaching of financial literacy in their Ontario and Québec classrooms.

As will become evident in the course of this dissertation, taking a critical approach to financial literacy is interpreted in divergent ways by the teachers in this study. What is clear from this research, however, is that some teachers feel strongly that financial literacy education, at least in the way it is currently envisioned in policy and curricular frameworks, is insufficient. These teachers believe that in order to accomplish what it purports to do—empower citizens to lead financially secure and prosperous lives—financial literacy education has to be reframed towards economically just ends. The story of Ella Baker’s efforts to educate the public about pressing political and economic issues of her time reminds us that a critical financial literacy education is neither a novel idea nor out of reach. A critical financial literacy education is both possible and attainable because it once already *was*.

Equally, the stories of teachers in this study attest that this kind of education is possible *today*, illustrating the multitude of ways it can take shape. Their stories remind us, too, that given the current political moment, a critical financial literacy education cannot be relegated to boutique, specialized courses, available only in *some* schools to *some* students. Escalating economic inequality and the widening racial wealth gap, mass unemployment and the current financial crisis, impending climate disasters, and antidemocratic politics worldwide convey a

sense of urgency and a timely relevance for a more critical and transformative financial literacy education.

Overview of Financial Literacy Education Initiatives

Originating in consumer education and home economics, financial literacy education has received renewed attention since the 2008 global financial crisis (Arthur, 2012c; Faulkner, 2015). In its aftermath, calls for financial literacy increased dramatically, as governments, politicians, and policymakers worldwide blamed irresponsible financial behaviour of consumers for the financial collapse (OECD, 2015; Pinto, 2013b; Stanford, 2010). Often presented as a panacea for individual and national economic insecurity, the concept of financial literacy, as synthesized by the international Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2016), a major advocate for financial literacy worldwide, refers to:

knowledge and understanding of financial concepts and risks, and the skills, motivation, and confidence to apply such knowledge and understanding in order to make effective decisions across a range of financial contexts, to improve the financial well-being of individuals and society, and to enable participation in economic life. (p. 85)

In Canada and the United States, one result of efforts to increase public financial literacy has been the widespread adoption of financial literacy education in the secondary school curriculum through stand-alone courses or academic standards and expectations incorporated into existing career and economics courses and other social studies subjects (Soroko, 2020). In the United States, for instance, the Council for Economic Education (2016) reported that between 2002 and 2016 the number of states requiring financial literacy standards to be implemented in schools increased from 17 to 37. In Canada, I surveyed all 10 provinces and

three territories and found that every region now includes financial literacy in their secondary school curricula in various careers, math, business, and social studies courses. As I detail in the next chapter, some provinces have even eliminated critical social studies content to ensure financial literacy is included. For example, the province of Québec reduced its *Contemporary World* course, covering important topics such as the distribution of wealth and power, to half the teaching time to make room for a mandatory financial literacy class (McCallum, 2016). In 2016 in Ontario, where financial literacy was not a stand-alone course at the time but incorporated into other subjects, the Ministry of Education contemplated removing the province's compulsory civics class in order to make space for a full credit course in careers, which would have included financial literacy instruction (Nanowski, 2016; Tidridge, 2016).

Rising interest in financial literacy education persists as the current financial crisis unfolds. In contrast to the 2008 financial recession, however, public sense-making of the present-day economic downturn differs in character. Less prominent is the idea that individual financial illiteracy caused the collapse than in 2008 when a disproportionate amount of blame was placed on subprime loans and the borrowing by low-income individuals that were said to have triggered the housing market bust (Adelino et al., 2017; Foote et al., 2020). At the same time, adherents of financial literacy education today are using the current economic collapse to push an updated version of the older narrative. This time, even if ordinary citizens are not blamed for the recession, COVID-19, proceeds the rhetoric, has exposed their financial irresponsibility and illiteracy. This argument has been prominent in such headlines as: "Coronavirus reveals financial irresponsibility of Americans" (Tate, 2020) and "Especially after COVID-19, Canadians need better financial literacy and teachers can help" (Henderson & Beach, 2021). Internationally, the release of the PISA 2018 results in May 2020 was announced with the following message: "The

coronavirus crisis is wreaking havoc on economies around the world. With unemployment increasing and a global recession looming, it's more important than ever to ask: are adolescents knowledgeable about money matters?" (OECD, 2020, para. 1). In September 2020, a Charles Schwab Financial Literacy Survey was making the news with the headline: "New financial literacy survey exposes grave impact of lack of financial education during COVID-19" (The Charles Schwab Foundation, 2020). The survey showed that "89% of Americans agree that lack of financial education contributes to some of the biggest social issues our country faces, including poverty (58%), lack of job opportunities (53%), unemployment (53%), and wealth inequality (52%) (The Charles Schwab Foundation, 2020, para. 6). As such, proponents of financial literacy education continue to tie individual financial know-how and subsequent behaviour to deep-seated social problems and economic woes even in the face of a financial crisis caused by a raging, deadly virus and global civil rights protests that have brought to light the long history of economic injustice for racialized people.

Research Problem and Rationale

Despite financial literacy's increasing presence in Canadian and U.S. school curricula, there has been little empirical investigation exploring teachers' beliefs and practices regarding financial literacy. As I will discuss in Chapter Three, most research on financial literacy education in schools has centred on two areas: 1) surveys and polls measuring students' financial knowledge, confidence, attitude, and behaviour (e.g., OECD, 2017) and 2) experimental and quasi-experimental studies of the effects of financial education interventions on financial literacy among youth (e.g., Amagir et al., 2017). The few empirical studies of teachers have primarily reported on teachers' professional background, preparation, and capacity to teach personal

finance (e.g., Way & Holden, 2009). How teachers conceptualize and enact financial literacy education and their attendant views on public policy issues concerning economics and finance have yet to be researched in an empirically substantive way. At the time I started this research, a study of Canadian teachers in relation to financial literacy education remained to be explored.

In Canadian and U.S. secondary school curricula documents, intended to govern teaching, financial literacy content is often housed within social studies frameworks that open with introductions citing a renewed focus on critical thinking, citizenship, democracy, and the public good as directives for education in the 21st century (Soroko, 2020). Yet, lessons about money and wealth in these documents closely resemble dominant forms of financial literacy education noted in other studies (Soroko, 2020). For example, international research on various programs and resources produced by federal government agencies, financial industry corporations, banks, non-profit organizations, and charities demonstrates the tendency to promote a depoliticized, individualistic, and consumerist version of personal finance—devoid of broader political, social, and economic issues affecting individuals' ability to build wealth (e.g., Arthur, 2012c; Blue & Pinto, 2017; Hütten et al., 2018; Pinto & Chan, 2010; Tamir & Davidson, 2019).

In response to this narrow and individualistically oriented vision, a number of scholars internationally have called for a more critically minded form of financial literacy, one that in addition to teaching about personal money management educates students about the structural causes and collective solutions to financial insecurity and poverty (e.g., Arthur, 2012c; Hütten et al., 2018; Tamir & Davidson, 2019). While these scholars offer important theoretical critiques of financial literacy education, teachers' perspectives and the way that they understand and act as conduits of official financial literacy curricula are yet to be explored. Even within an increasingly

standardized educational climate, teachers are “curricular-instructional gatekeepers,” making daily choices about how to enact official curriculum (Thornton, 2003, p. 228). Few studies, however, have investigated teachers’ beliefs and approaches to teaching financial literacy beyond whether they have the knowledge and capacity to deliver the established curriculum.

Critical scholars have also noted that mainstream financial literacy education has achieved a “sacred cow status” (Pinto, 2013b). As Lauren Willis, professor of law at Loyola University, expressed to Helaine Olen (2012), author of *Pound Foolish: Exposing the Dark Side of the Personal Finance Industry*, “financial literacy is an ideological belief rather than an empirical belief. Question financial literacy and you’re challenging the American way” (as cited in Olen, 2012, p. 216). In the public and political arena, however, financial literacy education is routinely presented as a value-neutral, common-sense solution to problems that are technical, not political, in nature (Arthur, 2012c; Pinto, 2012). In line with the ideology-free positioning of financial literacy education is a common perception of teachers’ beliefs and attitudes as apolitical, individual values that have little to do with the existing larger political, social, and economic order (Bartolomé, 2008). Teachers’ work, however, is influenced by various curriculum and policy guidelines, which are not neutral enterprises. Furthermore, teaching occurs within *schools*, institutions inextricably tied to a larger context of community, provincial, and national politics. Calling for teachers to reflect on their own practices, Giroux (1988) cautions that left unexamined, teachers’ assumptions about curriculum and pedagogy risk not only transmitting “unquestioned attitudes, norms, and beliefs” but also endorsing “forms of cognitive and dispositional development that strengthen rather than challenge existing forms of institutional oppression” (p. 17).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to spotlight teachers, the professionals on the ground making curricular decisions about how best to teach financial literacy to students, and their assumptions, thoughts, and experiences with financial literacy education. In the same vein, I seek to convey that teachers are intellectuals, capable of weighing in on academic and political discussions around financial literacy education and related public issues concerning finance and economics. Furthermore, through research with secondary school teachers in Ontario and Québec who self-identify as having a critical approach to financial literacy teaching, I illuminate a broader spectrum of teacher beliefs and practices relative to financial literacy education than is currently available in the literature. I also explore how a more critical approach to financial literacy education, a subject that tends to be framed in conventional and *uncritical* terms, emerges in the teachers in this study. Finally, I consider the extent to which the beliefs and practices reported by the teachers in this inquiry challenge or comply with traditional models of financial literacy. By doing so, I expose the politics of financial literacy education, both in terms of the ideological assumptions of the subject matter itself and in relation to teachers' political and intellectual identities.

Research Questions and Overview of the Study

Three central questions guided this study:

- 1) *What are the beliefs and practices of teachers who take a critical approach to financial literacy education?*
- 2) *How and why does a critical sense of financial literacy education emerge in these teachers?*

3) *To what extent do teachers' beliefs and practices reflect or resist prevalent models of financial literacy?*

I sought to answer these three research questions through a case study of outlier teachers who are different from the norm. That is to say, the teachers in this study report understanding and teaching financial literacy in a way that is atypical from conventional conceptions and pedagogy of financial literacy. In order to gain insights from multiple angles and obtain rich, thick descriptions characteristic of case study research (Merriam, 2009; Thomas, 2016), I collected data using multiple instruments. To better grasp teachers' beliefs and practices as well as what they mean when teachers report that they teach critically, I conducted two rounds of in-depth interviews and one round of deliberative inquiry focus groups with 10 teachers. I also conducted an extensive document analysis of over 60 resources that inspire and guide teachers' practice. A review of public records that laid out the context within which teachers work and live was also part of the analysis. Finally, I relied on analytical memos I had written to myself throughout the research process and used both categorizing and connecting strategies to analyze data, including identifying themes in the data and composing narrative vignettes of participants. While Chapter Four describes the research process and methods in more detail, Table 1 and Table 2, below, provide an overview of the study and the participants.

Table 1*Overview of the Study*

Research Questions	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis	Conceptual framework
1. What are the beliefs and practices of teachers who take a critical approach to financial literacy education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews 1 and 2 • Deliberative inquiry focus group • Documents (lesson plans, teaching resources, and sources of inspiration) • Documents (mass media and official records) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to and transcribing audio recordings • Writing memos • Coding • Conducting thematic analysis of interviews and focus groups • Conducting thematic analysis of documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature on teachers as intellectuals and civic agents • Common sense, critical, and transformative teaching framework (from this study)
2. How and why does a critical sense of financial literacy education emerge in these teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews 1 and 2 • Deliberative inquiry focus group • Documents (lesson plans, teaching resources, and sources of inspiration) • Documents (mass media and official records) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to and transcribing audio recordings • Writing memos • Composing vignettes • Conducting thematic analysis of documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature on teachers as intellectuals and civic agents • Ideas about criticality in the literature (common sense ideology, critical thinking tradition, critical pedagogy)
3. To what extent do teachers' beliefs and practices reflect or resist prevalent models of financial literacy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews 1 and 2 • Deliberative inquiry focus group • Scholarly literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of findings in relation to the literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature on financial literacy education as neoliberal ideology • Literature on critical approaches to financial literacy education • Critical economic literacy framework (from this study)

Table 2*Participant Information*

	Teacher *	Province	System	Gender	Years Teaching**	Level	Subject	School
1	Andrew	Ontario	Public (English)	Male	11-15 years	Intermediate/ Senior	Social sciences Arts	High income Urban
2	Eric	Ontario	Public (English)	Male	6-10 years	Intermediate/ Senior	Business Geography	Middle income Rural
3	Lucas	Ontario	Public, Catholic (French)	Male	6-10 years	Intermediate/ Senior	Business	Middle income Urban
4	Miles	Ontario	Public (English)	Male	11-15 years	Intermediate	Various	Middle income Urban
5	Vincent	Québec	Public (English)	Male	11-15 years	Intermediate/ Senior	Social sciences Humanities	Mixed income Urban
6	Noah	Ontario	Public, Catholic (English)	Male	6-10 years	Intermediate/ Senior	Mathematics	Mixed income Urban
7	Jackie	Ontario	Private Alternative (English)	Female	1-5 years	Intermediate	Family studies	High income Urban
8	Maria	Québec	Public (English)	Female	11-15 years	Intermediate/ Senior	Social sciences French	Middle income Urban
9	Oliver	Ontario	Public, Catholic Alternative (English)	Male	6-10 years	Senior	Social sciences	Mixed income Urban
10	Lily	Ontario	Public, Catholic Alternative (English)	Female	11-15 years	Intermediate/ Senior	Social sciences Arts	Mixed income Urban

Note. *Participants' names are pseudonyms.

**Number of years teaching is calculated from the first interview (summer 2019)

Definition of Terms

Thus far I have used the terms *financial literacy* and *financial literacy education* because these are the standard terms that are prevalent in the scholarly literature. As the dissertation moves towards conceptions of financial literacy and financial literacy education that depart from the conventional understanding of financial literacy education as merely teaching and learning to manage one's money, I often use *financial literacy* and *financial literacy education* interchangeably with *critical economic literacy* and *critical economic literacy education*. In the literature, however, there is a clear distinction between these two concepts, which I briefly cover below (and in-depth in Chapter Three's conceptual framework).

Financial Literacy and Financial Literacy Education

As noted earlier, the OECD's (2016) definition of *financial literacy* comprises "the knowledge and understanding of financial concepts and risks" as well as "skills, motivation, and confidence to apply such knowledge and understanding" for effective decision-making in "a range of financial contexts," "financial well-being of individuals and society," and "participation in economic life." (p. 85). *Financial literacy education*, then, is the teaching and learning of such knowledge, understandings, and skills.

Critical Economic Literacy and Critical Economic Literacy Education

Scholars have proposed various ways to recast financial literacy education towards more critical orientations, described in Chapter Three. While scholars' conceptualizations vary, the point of departure for each is that personal finance approaches decontextualize and depoliticize financial outcomes. I thus use the term *critical economic literacy* in this dissertation in reference to having skills and knowledge that depart from the traditional model of financial literacy. I selected this specific term because I first encountered the idea of economic literacy in an article

by Rogers (2014), “The Need for Economic Literacy for Students and Teachers: Insights from John Dewey.” In this article, Rogers (2014) explains that for Dewey, “‘economic literacy’ means more than knowledge about personal financial matters. It entails understanding how current economic structures shape social relations (including the distribution of wealth and power), as well as a familiarity with possible alternative structures” (p. 419). I elaborate on similarly proposed ideas by other scholars in Chapter Three. As becomes clear in the course of this dissertation, Dewey’s and other critical scholars’ conception of economic literacy is also the kind that concerns several teachers in this study. Moreover, I selected the phrase *critical economic literacy* because one of the participants, as I discuss in Chapter Five, uses the term when describing the absence of “critical economic literacy” that he sees in schools, suggesting the need for a *critical economic literacy education*.

Use of Terms in the Dissertation

In this dissertation the terms *financial literacy* and *critical economic literacy* are thus often interchangeable because most of the teachers in the study interpret financial literacy as critical economic literacy. Especially for the teachers who refuse to teach financial literacy in a strictly personal finance sense of the word, financial literacy *is* critical economic literacy. The term financial literacy when cited in teacher interviews is therefore often used the same way as critical economic literacy. In many of these instances, I am also quoting the participants verbatim, so I have used the term employed by the participant and recorded in the transcript.

In other sections of the dissertation, I take a different approach. For example, I clearly distinguish between financial literacy and critical economic literacy when reviewing the literature on financial literacy education. In such cases, I usually make the distinction by referring to “mainstream,” “conventional,” “traditional,” “narrow,” “individualistic,” or

“personal finance minded” approaches to financial literacy since these differ significantly from the more encompassing critical economic literacy approaches. Since the majority of research and scholarship on financial literacy education conceives of it in the personal finance sense of the term, I differentiate it from the critical economic literacy approach that concerns this research.

The ways in which I use these terms is usually clear from the context in which they appear.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation comprises nine chapters. This first chapter has introduced the topic of the dissertation, namely the study of teachers who self-identify as taking a critical approach to teaching financial literacy. I have also provided the context within which the research emerged and an overview of financial literacy education, situating my research within this broader conversation. I have described the research problem, rationale, purpose, research questions, overview of the study and the participants, as well as pertinent terminology.

The next chapter, Chapter Two, lays out the context within which this research occurs, focusing on major political events between 2016 and 2019 in Ontario and Québec. First, I portray the political climate in Ontario and the reforms that took place under the Progressive Conservative government. I describe the teacher strikes of 2019 and youth political organizing in support of teachers and climate action that occurred during the same period. I then move on to discuss the public perception of financial literacy education and the results of the province-wide public consultation of 2018. Next, I recount the failed attempt to remove the mandatory *Civics and Citizenship* course from the Ontario curriculum to make space for financial literacy education in 2016. Turning to Québec, I outline the various immigration and religious

discrimination reforms in the province that marked 2019. Focusing on the new secondary *Financial Education* course, I describe the response it received in Québec when it was introduced in 2017. Widening my lens, I conclude with the various crises and social movements that transpired in 2020, including the COVID-19 pandemic and public health crisis, the global economic downturn that followed, and the Black Lives Matter protests against anti-Black racism and police brutality.

Chapter Three comprises the conceptual framework underpinning this study, including a literature review of pertinent research and scholarship. In Part I, I begin with a brief history of neoliberalism followed by a discussion of its influence on education. Next, I discuss teacher professional autonomy under neoliberalism and how financial literacy education both epitomizes and perpetuates neoliberal thought. I then argue that in emphasizing the role of teachers as technicians, current research on teachers who teach financial literacy education further highlights the neoliberal turn in education and educational research. In Part II, I look at how neoliberal versions of financial literacy education have been challenged, beginning with a framework that summarizes how critical scholars have reconceptualized financial literacy education in response to mainstream versions. I argue, also, that this study remedies a major deficit in the literature on critical approaches to financial literacy education having to do with the lack of empirical research with teachers. I then examine ideas about criticality by locating them within the traditions of critical thinking and critical pedagogy, also exploring the place of common sense thinking in these classifications. Last, I discuss the role of teachers as transformative intellectuals and civic agents.

The research design and the methods used in this case study are the topic of Chapter Four. I begin by discussing what makes the research a case study, how I delineated a set of

boundaries to determine what constitutes the case in question, and the aims and nature of this case study of outlier teachers. Next, I summarize the recruitment process and the strategies I used to recruit participants, including purposive sampling and snowball sampling. I provide a table with information on the participants and their involvement in the various procedures by which data collection occurred. I then proceed to describe in detail the multiple instruments I used to collect data, including individual interviews, deliberative inquiry focus groups, and three types of documents. I move on to discuss data analysis, including the use of analytical memos and transcription. I also outline the categorizing and connecting strategies I used to analyze data, which involved thematic analysis and the creation of participant vignettes. Next, I discuss the strategies I used to validate results. The chapter concludes by exploring the philosophical assumptions underlying this study and various ethical considerations.

The next three chapters detail the research results and analysis. Chapter Five reports on data collected during individual interviews and deliberative inquiry focus groups to illuminate how teachers understand financial literacy education and how they translate their beliefs into practice. The data is presented in seven themes. The first theme concerning the absence of critical economic literacy in schools sets the stage for the subsequent themes, outlining the ways in which teachers perceive a deficit in financial literacy education courses and curricula and in public discourses around personal finance. Theme 2 examines what critical economic literacy learning and teaching demands of students and teachers. Divided into four subthemes, this theme addresses how teachers define financial literacy education, the knowledge and the skills that a critical economic literacy requires of students, and the pedagogical strategies that participants in this study use in their teaching of it. In Theme 3, teachers explain and theorize the appeal and popularity of financial literacy education. While in Theme 4 teachers describe the ways in which

neoliberal thinking permeates education, Theme 5 attends to the ways in which they push back against it. Theme 6 addresses teachers' need for a community of like-minded individuals with whom they can collaborate. Finally, the tensions that surfaced during data analysis and the evident contradictions between teachers' beliefs and practice make up Theme 7.

Chapter Six addresses teachers' political and intellectual identities as expressed through the issue of financial literacy education. I present a vignette for each teacher that elucidates how personal biography and life experience, professional and political activities, and intellectual pursuits inform their critical teaching. I also spotlight how teachers come to their particular understandings and enactments of critical teaching in the context of financial literacy and explore critical moments that had an impact on their current views and an engagement with critical financial literacy. I then bring forth the distinctions that emerged among participants' ideas about criticality in relation to financial literacy education. I describe three orientations towards which teachers tend to navigate (common sense, critical sense, and transformative sense), illustrating how these are enacted in teaching using the example of predatory lending.

Chapter Seven's analysis of the resources, lesson plans, and sources of inspiration on which teachers draw continues the exploration from Chapter Five of teachers' critical practices. It also expands on Chapter Six, which investigates teachers' critical sense in relation to financial literacy education. Most of the resources are ones that teachers have identified themselves and use at their own discretion. The resources cover a range of topics that I grouped into three themes: "Historical Context and Foundational Concepts," "Contemporary Issues," and "Future Imaginaries." Resources under the "Historical Context and Foundational Concepts" theme concern the economic history of our economic and financial systems and the historical origins of economic injustice. These resources also demystify the concepts of capitalism and neoliberalism

as well as the discipline of economics. Under the “Contemporary Issues” theme, resources tackle the broader contexts under which financial decision-making occurs and address the major economic and political challenges of the current era concerning inequality and environmental degradation. Last, resources in the “Future Imaginaries” theme look forward, envisioning more promising alternatives and providing tools to achieve them. This chapter also lists the lessons teachers used to teach financial literacy, comprising the topics of wealth distribution, predatory lending, consumerism, economic growth, reparations, the myth of the American dream, family budgeting, federal budget, taxation, and corporations. The chapter concludes by examining the sources of inspiration for teachers that include important people in their lives and exposure to philosophers, theorists, various texts, organizations and commissions, news sources, and other media.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings from previous chapters according to the three research questions that guided this study. In response to the first question concerning the beliefs and practices of teachers, I summarize the conceptions of critical, transformative, and common sense teaching. Concerning the second research question around how and why a critical sense of financial literacy education emerges in teachers, I discuss the politics of the moment, the politics of teaching financial literacy, and the idea of a political education. In the last section, I address the third research question, analyzing how teachers’ beliefs and practices reflect or resist prevalent models of financial literacy as well as the multiple and contradictory responses to financial literacy education encountered in the research. I then illustrate how teachers’ enactment of critical financial literacy education overlaps in numerous ways with how critical financial literacy education is conceived in the literature. I conclude with several implications of the

research, discussing the multiple meanings of financial literacy and criticality, the importance of a robust K-12 social studies curriculum, and notions of teachers as intellectuals and civic agents.

The concluding chapter reports on the limitations of the research, which address the nature of qualitative research approaches and two methodological choices. I also list the contributions of this study to educational theory, research, policy, and practice. I end with several recommendations for future research and practice as well as some final thoughts about this project that raise questions for education writ large.

Chapter Two: Extraordinary Times

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.

And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

– Howard Zinn, *You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train*

This chapter draws from various media sources to recount some of the most significant events that took place during the course of this project. In case study approaches, which are characterized by “holistic description and explanation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29), providing rich, real-life context for research findings is key. Given the political nature of financial literacy education, which I describe in the next chapter, the socioeconomic and political conditions in which teachers work and live are all the more pertinent. The current milieu is also noteworthy because during the interviews, teachers routinely made connections among, on the one hand, their experiences, perspectives, and teaching approaches, and on the other, contemporary events and political realities. In fact, the events described in this chapter were front and centre in many of the interviews I conducted. For these reasons, I outline below the most relevant developments in the provinces of Ontario and Québec, and sometimes beyond, to contextualize the themes described in later chapters, primarily focusing on the period between 2016 and 2020.

Ontario

At the time I started the core of this research, Ontario was undergoing a major political transformation. March 2019 marks the official start date of the empirical portion of my study as I orally defended my dissertation proposal and applied to the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board (REB) to obtain approval for data collection. At this time, I was also teaching *The Context of Ontario Middle and Secondary Schools*, a course in the Teacher Education program at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education. The 37 students in my class were in the last semester of the Bachelor of Education program and about to begin their careers when Premier Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative government announced significant funding cuts to public education spending. Detrimental to teachers and students, these political changes certainly made for teachable moments in a class concerned with the context of Ontario schools, especially because I had designed the course around current events and contemporary issues in education. In light of this study, these political developments also made for a researchable moment.

"Snitch Lines" and Teacher Autonomy

One of the issues I examined with the students in my class was the public perception of teachers in Ontario and the undervaluation of the profession dating back to the Common Sense Revolution under Premier Mike Harris in the 1990s (Gidney, 1999). Various events in Ontario at the time helped to illustrate this trend to my students. For instance, during the previous summer, Premier Doug Ford's government had launched a site for parents to file complaints against teachers who they suspected were teaching the 2015 health and physical education curriculum (often "referred to as the "sex-ed" curriculum) introduced by the Liberal government. The 2015 curriculum, which included topics such as online safety, same-sex relationships, and gender identity, was deemed too "graphic" and "disturbing" by its opponents (Harris, 2018). As such,

the Progressive Conservatives repealed this 2015 version in July 2018, replacing it with an interim curriculum that was based on one dating back to 1998 and later changing it to a revised 2010 version instead (Brockbank, 2019; Walsh, 2018).

To ensure that teachers were using only the 2010 curriculum, the government unveiled a complaints website for parents (fortheparents.ca), which was soon dubbed a “snitch line” by its critics (Brockbank, 2019; Walsh, 2018). Some of the complaints from parents about educators teaching same-sex marriage, sexting, and masturbation from the 2015 curriculum were flagged by the Ontario government as “allegations of professional misconduct,” placing them in the same category as complaints about teachers using racial slurs and making sexual advances toward students (Brockbank, 2019, para. 1). This attack on teachers’ professionalism and autonomy created a climate of distrust and hostility, especially worrisome for those who saw themselves as activist educators or those who tend to gravitate towards teaching what some may regard as controversial issues. As I further discuss in Chapter Six, one of the participants in this study, Andrew, worried about the risks of teaching “in this day and age with almost McCarthyist aspects to the ways certain governments are approaching educators with hotlines or snitch lines for teachers who maybe aren’t following whatever sexual health curriculum they want in.”

Education Cuts and Teacher Resistance

Both in and out of class, my students and I were eagerly following the news. One wintry Thursday morning class in March of 2019 was especially memorable. We listened to a live radio interview with then Education Minister Lisa Thompson, shortly after the government’s announcement to introduce mandatory e-learning, revamp the Ontario Autism Program, and increase class sizes (CBC Radio, 2019). We spent much of that morning digesting and discussing these current events. The news was particularly troubling for the teacher candidates in my course

because they anticipated that cuts to teaching jobs were imminent. Indeed, as the course wrapped up in early April, a provincial memo declared that 3,475 full-time teaching positions would be eliminated within four years (Powers, 2019).

In protest of the funding cuts and reforms to the province's education system, the five largest education unions—the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and the Franco-Ontarian Teachers' Association (AEFO)—organized a rally in Toronto (The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2019a). On April 6, 2019, more than 30,000 educators, parents, students, community members, and allies attended the Rally for Education at Queen's Park (The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2019a). Hashtags such as #CutsHurtKids and #NoCutsToEducation began trending on Twitter while #MoreResilient became a sensation as the public derided Lisa's Thompson claims that increasing class size would make students more resilient. Online, people retorted with sardonic tweets such as "Bring peanuts back to the cafeteria! Make kids #moresilient against anaphylaxis" (Spatuk, 2019).

Following the spring rally in Toronto, the 2019-2020 school year was marked by work-to-rule actions, rotating strikes, and province-wide walkouts as all four of Ontario teachers' unions (AEFO, ETFO, OECTA, and OSSTF) engaged in job actions in protest of the funding cuts and for better quality public education (Rocca, 2020). During this time, Ontario teachers and members of the public began wearing "Red for Ed" on Fridays to show support and solidarity for public education (The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2019b). The "Red for Ed" campaign originated in West Virginia as thousands of teachers rallied for better pay and working conditions in the winter of 2018 (Campbell, 2016). The grassroots movement later spread to

Kentucky, Oklahoma, Colorado, and North Carolina as educators across the United States demanded fair wages and protection of public education against private interests (Campbell, 2016). While the movement began in the United States, it was first embraced in Canada by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario after the Ford government cutbacks (ATA News Staff, 2020). BC and Alberta teachers soon joined in response to provincial budget shortfalls of \$84.17 million and \$275 million respectively (ATA News Staff, 2020).

Throughout the course of this research, political expression and collective teacher resistance to neoliberal reforms within public education surfaced continually in the public sphere as teachers fought for their own rights and the rights of their students. The mass demonstrations, however, came to a halt in March 2020, just as the Ontario government declared province-wide school closures in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Rocca, 2020). On March 12, 2020, OECTA announced it had reached a tentative deal with the Ontario government and would suspend strike action, followed by EFTO, AEFO, and finally OSSTF on April 20, 2020 (Rocca, 2020). Teacher resistance throughout the period I have so far discussed, however, was not only visible in the grassroots movement and mass demonstrations I witnessed in the news and heard about from friends and colleagues in the teaching profession. It also manifested in the ways that the teachers in this study challenge and resist status-quo understandings of financial literacy education that favour self-interest and market principles over economic justice and the public good, themes that I describe in Chapter Five. In these ways, this study's participants were part of a much larger narrative of opposition to inequality and the attack on public schooling that was underway.

Youth Organizing in Support of Teachers and Climate Action

Adults were not the only ones expressing outrage during this politically tumultuous time. In what one teacher in this study called “a sense of the moment,” youth started organizing, too. Young people across Ontario demonstrated their civic engagement as over 100,000 students walked out of school on April 4, 2019 to protest, among other changes, class-size increases, mandatory online courses as well as the new math and health and physical education curricula (CBC News, 2019). Reflecting on what motivated her to participate in the protests, Layan Rasoul, a 17-year-old student at Applewood Heights Secondary School in Mississauga explained:

None of us want these education funding cuts, NONE OF US. We are the future of this province and of this country, and if Ford isn't willing to invest in that, then what does he really value? He's not gonna be here once we're leading this nation, so how can we allow him to destroy our opportunities? He wants “resilience?” We'll show him resilience. (Sahar & Kwong, 2019, para. 4)

Canadian youth had already started organizing to combat climate change beginning in November 2018 through the Fridays for Future school strikes founded earlier that year in August by then 15-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg (*Fridays for Future Canada*, n.d.). Thunberg was just one of numerous young people leading the movement for climate justice worldwide, among activists such as Xiye Bastida, Isra Hirsi, Nadia Nazar, and Kevin Patel (Burton, 2019). On September 20, 2019 youth leaders all over the world organized the now historic Global Climate Strike, in which over four million people participated to demand action on the issue (Burton, 2019). One of the youngest environmental activists, Mari Copeny (2018), had been speaking out against the Flint water crisis in Michigan since she was 10 years old,

declaring the need for “leaders that have a heart and care about everyone and not just the interest of big business and the top 10%. We need to protect dreamers, we need to protect kids in the most vulnerable areas, we need love and for people to care about their communities” (para. 6).

Watching young people all over the world speak up and galvanize into political action, I often found the portrayals of youth in the news cycle discordant with reality. Former vice-president and current President of the United States Election Joe Biden, for instance, was quoted in January of 2018 saying that he had no empathy for the younger generation about “how tough things are,” demanding that since there was “no place to hide,” they get “more involved,” just as his generation had done with the civil rights and women’s movements (Los Angeles Times, 2018). Especially jarring were the daily headlines arriving in my inbox through the Google alert I had set for “financial literacy,” in which young people were frequently painted as incapable and financially irresponsible: “Millennials have worse money skills than teenagers, report claims” (Busby, 2018); and “Financial literacy is key to helping millennials get out of debt, experts say” (Bennardo, 2019). At the same time, few of these stories acknowledged the financial illiteracy of politicians and key decision-makers or the conditions of austerity and economic inequality under which young people are drowning in debt.

Public Perceptions of Financial Literacy Education in Ontario

Then Education Minister Lisa Thompson claimed that the government’s decision, described earlier, to increase class sizes was based on the recommendations of parents, teachers, students, and other members of the public who participated in the province-wide consultation in the fall of 2018 (Draaisma, 2019). Education in Ontario was a public consultation put forward by the Progressive Conservative government, which involved telephone town hall sessions, an online survey, and an open submission form (Draaisma, 2019). Its goal was to consult “with

people across the province to solicit feedback on all components of the education system” (Government of Ontario, 2018, para. 3). Among topics such as “improving provincial standardized testing” and “building a new age-appropriate Health and Physical Education curriculum” was “ensuring students graduate with important life skills, including financial literacy” (Government of Ontario, 2018, para. 3). Because the consultation covered financial literacy education, I decided to investigate.

In May 2019, The Ontario Ministry of Education (2019b) posted a report on their website of the aggregated quantitative data collected during the public consultation from over 37 telephone town hall sessions between October 19 and December 6, 2018. The first question in the report asked: “Do you think students in Ontario have the knowledge, skills and confidence to be considered financially literate?” Of the 1,719 participants who provided a response, 230 replied with “I don’t know,” 142 replied with “Yes,” and an overwhelming majority—1, 347 participants—answered “No” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019b). The second question asked participants if they agreed with the following statement: “While financial literacy is important, I believe technology will soon solve most of our current concerns.” A total of 498 participants provided a response. Thirty-three of the respondents didn’t know, 29 agreed, and 436 disagreed (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019b).

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2019a) also posted the results of the online survey, in which the following definition of financial literacy from Canada’s Task Force on Financial Literacy was used: “financial literacy means having the knowledge, skills and confidence to make responsible financial decisions at any stage of your life.” The question then asked: “How well is the current education system teaching students about the following life skills?” Respondents were able to select a rating on a scale of 1–5, where 1 meant “very poorly” and 5

meant “very well.” “I’m not sure” was also an option. The categories of life skills included: calculating interest and interest payments; managing their own bank account; protecting against financial fraud; understanding savings, investing and planning for retirement; understanding the concept of living within their means; and using a credit card responsibly. Under every single category, “very poorly” received the most responses (ranging from 9,850 to 13,268 depending on the category) and “very well” the least (ranging from 1,034 to 1,340) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019a). The total number of participants reported was 33,362, but it is unclear whether each respondent answered every question.

The public consultation results showed that the majority of the public did not think students were financially literate and that the current education system was not teaching students basic financial literacy skills in a satisfactory manner. Nevertheless, I sought to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the public’s responses from the Education in Ontario consultation, and on May 10, 2019, I submitted a Freedom of Information Request to the Ministry of Education. I explained that while the quantitative results had been posted on the Ministry’s website, these reports did not provide any information on the qualitative, more in-depth oral and written responses from the participants of the telephone town halls, the online surveys, and the open submission forum. I disclosed that I was a Ph.D. candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa, conducting research on financial literacy education in Ontario, and that I was specifically interested in participants’ responses regarding financial literacy (excluding any information that would identify individual respondents). On May 27, 2019, I received an email asking me to clarify in the Freedom of Information Request that I was requesting copies of the submissions concerning *only* the financial literacy component. I also received a letter in the mail

acknowledging my request that same day. I immediately confirmed by email that I indeed was looking for strictly the financial literacy portion of the data.

A few weeks later, a decision letter dated June 19, 2019, arrived in the mail, stating that the Ministry has denied my request due to an exemption determining that the records must be withheld under section 12 (Cabinet Records). Even as a researcher, I was denied access to data from what had supposedly been a public consultation. Interestingly, when the federal government established The Task Force on Financial Literacy in 2009 with the goal of developing a national strategy to strengthen Canadians' financial literacy, the Task Force also undertook public consultations both through written submissions and from the background reports that it commissioned from stakeholders (Schwartz, 2011). In an analysis of these submissions and the report that followed, Saul Schwartz (2011) argues that "the Task Force either ignored or downplayed contributions from the public that conflicted with its eventual recommendations" (p. 353). Specifically, Schwartz (2011) documents how when it came to two issues, the needs of low-income Canadians and the concerns from labour unions that financial literacy education was misplaced since the decline in savings rates was not due to financial illiteracy but stagnating wages, these considerations were absent from the final report released in 2010, *Canadians and Their Money: Building a Brighter Financial Future*. The analysis carried out by Schwartz (2011) of the Task Force consultation raises questions about the analogous secrecy of the 2018 public consultation, Education in Ontario.

Since I was denied access to information from the 2018 consultation, Education in Ontario, the only publicly available data were the brief summaries of the quantitative results, which I described earlier. Despite their brevity, they indicated that public perception of financial literacy education mirrors popular narratives in the media about young people's poor

understanding of money matters. The categories presented in the survey (saving, investing, credit, etc.) reveal an understanding of financial literacy education in line with the “back to basics” campaign of the Progressive Conservative government. In response to the “feedback from Ontario’s largest ever consultation on education,” the Ontario government announced on March 15, 2019 “Education that Works for You,” a plan “to modernize learning in the publicly funded education system” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019c, para. 1). Financial literacy was listed as one of the areas to be improved alongside math, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), skilled trades, Indigenous education, and digital curriculum. The news release stated that “financial literacy learning is essential to student success, to building a well-educated, responsible workforce and to preparing Ontarians for a more prosperous future” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019c, para. 13). It also publicised that financial literacy would be an area of focus in the revised math curriculum and a major component of the mandatory learning in the revised Grade 10 Career studies course scheduled for release in late May and for implementation in September 2019 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019c, para. 13).

Indeed, on July 2, 2019, the newly appointed education minister, Stephen Lecce, unveiled an updated mandatory career studies curriculum for Grade 10, which included financial literacy (Loriggio, 2019). The curriculum, according to Lecce, would focus again on “monetizable skills” and “the jobs of the future, such as those in science, technology, engineering and math” (Loriggio, 2019, para. 3). This directive was characteristic of the “going back to the basics” rhetoric pushed by the Ford government (Rushowy, 2019, para. 1), but adding financial literacy education to the Ontario curriculum, however, has been on the agenda for some time. Previously, in 2016 in Ontario, where financial literacy was not a stand-alone course at the time but incorporated into other subjects, the Ministry of Education contemplated converting the

province's compulsory civics course into an optional one in order to make space for a full credit course in careers, which would have included financial literacy instruction (Nanowski, 2016; Tidridge, 2016).

The proposal to cut the *Civics and Citizenship* course in Ontario, however, was met with resistance. Beginning at the end of September 2016, the Ontario History and Social Science Teachers' Association (OHASSTA) organized a social media and letter-writing campaign to keep Ontario's *Civics and Citizenship* course, arguing that the course was critical in shaping an active and engaged citizenry, the foundation of a robust democracy (Collishaw, 2017). Over the next several weeks, students and allies from organizations geared at strengthening Canada's democracy such as Civix and The Samara Centre for Democracy as well as other constituents joined teachers in political action, writing to members of provincial Parliament and then Minister of Education Mitzie Hunter to preserve the course (Collishaw, 2017). Responding to "the passionate outcry to protect the Civics course," the office of Education Minister Mitzie Hunter released a statement on November 3, announcing it had no plans to remove the mandatory course from the curriculum as "keeping Civics in our schools is integral in shaping young people to become Canada's next generation of engaged citizens" (Tidridge, 2016, paras. 17–18). The Ontario civics course was preserved in 2016, but vice-president of OHASSTA Rachel Collishaw (2017) cautioned that while the course was safe "for now," educators and the public "must continue to be vigilant to ensure that we all work together to educate students about civic engagement and democratic principles" (para. 2). At the time of writing, the half-credit civics course remains within Ontario's Canadian and World Studies curriculum.

Financial literacy education, nevertheless, continues to encroach on the K-12 curriculum. During my second round of interviews with teachers in June of 2020, Premier Doug Ford announced the province's new elementary math curriculum:

I made a promise to parents that we would fix the broken education system we inherited, get back to basics, and teach our children the math fundamentals they need for lifelong success. [...] Today, our government is delivering on that promise with the first-ever math curriculum in Canada for Grades 1-8 that includes the teaching of coding and financial literacy, both critical skills that will help our students prepare for and succeed in the modern world and in the modern workforce. (Government of Ontario, 2020, para. 3)

Going forward, students as young as six years old will be expected to learn “fundamentals” such as coding and financial literacy in an effort to prepare themselves for the workforce (Government of Ontario, 2020, para. 4).

Québec

Immigration Reforms and Religious Discrimination

As I was conducting the first set of interviews with teachers in June 2019, Québec adopted two contentious laws, initially introduced as Bill 9 and Bill 21 by the Coalition Avenir Québec, the nationalist majority party. Bill 9 aimed to reform the immigration system by giving the province's immigration minister more authority over who receives permanent residency in the province and allowing the government to eliminate about 16,000 immigration applications (Leavitt, 2019). It passed on June 16, 2019 by a vote of 62 to 42 in Québec's National Assembly (Leavitt, 2019). The other, Bill 21, banning religious symbols for public school teachers, police officers, and other public servants in positions of authority while at work, passed with a vote of

73 to 35 (Stevenson, 2019). A day later, Quebecers took to the streets to protest what they saw as legalized religious discrimination, while the National Council of Canadian Muslims and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association filed a motion seeking an injunction in Québec Superior Court (Montpetit, 2019).

On June 19th, the Faculty of Education at McGill University (2019) released a public statement in reaction to Bill 21, declaring that it went “against our Faculty’s inclusive values of providing all of our students, regardless of religious affiliation, with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed as teachers, principals, school psychologists, special care counsellors, among other educator roles” (para. 2). Later in November, the Fédération autonome de l’enseignement (FAE), the teachers' union representing 45,000 primary and secondary teachers, along with other groups, sued the provincial government (Lindeman, 2019). The union cited a violation of the right to freedom of religion as well as the right to equality given the disproportionate impact of the law on women who make up 75% of the teaching profession in Québec (Lindeman, 2019). *The New York Times* was just one of numerous international newspapers that reported on the ways in which the law has done irreparable harm to women, publishing a story in 2020 on four Muslim, Sikh, and Orthodox Jewish women whose lives and careers have been upended by the religious symbols ban (Bilefsky, 2020).

Response to the New Mandatory Financial Education Course

In September of 2017, Québec introduced a new mandatory *Financial Education* course, reducing the social studies course on geopolitics, *Contemporary World*, to half the teaching time (McCallum, 2016). The original four-credit *Contemporary World* program was designed to help students “grasp the complexity of the world today and be open to the diversity of the societies that make it up,” “develop their critical judgment by studying problems and issues of the

contemporary world,” and “prepare students to participate as responsible citizens in social debate” (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2017, p. 1). Once *Financial Education* was introduced, *Contemporary World* was diminished from four to two credits, eliminating two of its five themes, “Power” and “Environment.” The theme of “Power” included topics such as: cultural, economic and environmental policies; globalization of markets; multinational firms; pressure groups; and control of resources (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2017, pp. 29, 31). This theme was concerned with the idea that “the development of worldwide political, economic and cultural relations and exchanges that characterizes globalization has had an impact on the powers of states (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2017, p. 28) and included questions such as: “Who makes decisions in the world? Why do states accept or refuse to sign international agreements? Who establishes international consumption standards?” (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2017, p. 28).

The second theme that was removed when *Contemporary World* was cut from four to two credits was “Environment,” which concerned “the economic, political and social choices regarding the environment made by states or other actors, such as organizations or citizen groups, as well as the effort to establish international agreements recognizing environmental problems and seeking solutions” (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2017, p. 24). This theme examined topics such as climate change, mass consumption, environmental groups, and measures taken by states to recognize environmental problems and seek solutions (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2017, p. 25). It also explored the idea that societal choices around consumption are not only made by states but also by “individuals, businesses and social groups, whose consumption, production patterns and use of resources all

affect the environment” (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2017, p. 24). The “Environment” theme examined how “overexploitation or scarcity—and uneven distribution—of certain resources (hydrocarbons, drinking water, etc.) call for the reevaluation of choices regarding resource use” (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2017, p. 24). In other words, this theme addressed the kinds of environmental costs that are missing in conventional approaches to financial literacy lessons, as reported by teachers in this study (see Chapter Five). Removing both the themes of “Environment” and “Power,” however, created space for the new *Financial Education* course.

This *Financial Education* course claims to help students “develop critical judgment in managing their personal finances” and “develop the confidence and self-knowledge needed for financial well-being” (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2018, p. 1). Yet, the course does little to foster students’ “critical judgment,” attending only to the usual concepts found in traditional financial literacy approaches (see Chapter Three) such as “consumption, debt, savings, purchasing power, employment, and financing” (Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, 2018, p. 10). The kind of content needed to put some of these concepts in a wider context was removed from the original *Contemporary World* course, which *Financial Education* now replaces. An analysis by Lefrançois et al. (2017) of textual patterns and themes in the *Financial Education* course demonstrates that it does not, in fact, encourage students to foster or use critical thinking skills. Instead, argue Lefrançois et al. (2017), the replacement of *Contemporary World* with *Financial Education* resulted in a “narrow conception of economic citizenship,” reflecting an “ideologically conservative notion of political economy” (p. 35). “By limiting financial literacy to personal finances,” conclude Lefrançois et al. (2017),

“efforts to mould personally responsible citizens are detrimental to efforts aimed to equip critical, justice-oriented citizens” (p. 35).

The introduction of the new *Financial Education* course was thus met with resistance. Some of the opposition to the course related to broader concerns over the elimination of elective social studies courses in Québec, which in this particular case resulted in the reduction of the *Contemporary World* class (Lefrançois et al., 2017). Furthermore, when Québec Education Minister Sébastien Proulx announced the roll-out of the *Financial Education* course across the province, teachers’ unions demanded to suspend the initiative believing they had not been properly consulted (Valiante, 2017, para. 9). Teachers’ unions were also concerned that “the material doesn’t encourage enough critical thinking about capitalism and the global financial industry” (Valiante, 2017, para. 10). The Québec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT), the organization representing teachers in the nine English school boards of Québec and in the English schools of the Littoral School Board, also challenged the addition of a mandatory personal finance high school course. Sébastien Joly, president of QPAT, stated that “the introduction of a class like this is not in line with our philosophy of education,” and that it was “coming from the financial groups, bankers, and what not...” whereas teachers “have more of a liberal view. You’re supposed to acquire knowledge that would open your horizons and help you from a critical standpoint” (Valiante, 2017, paras. 3–4).

Sylvain Mallette, the head of Montreal’s largest teachers’ federation, the Fédération autonome de l’enseignement (FAE), declared that the new financial literacy class “was concocted by the banks,” asking, “How do we know the material that is being imposed won’t include marketing for the banks’ financial products?” (Valiante, 2017, para. 6). While these statements came from union leaders, they were meant to be representative of teachers’ perspectives as well

and indicated the likely presence of educators in the province who challenged mainstream views that presented financial literacy education as legitimate and empowering.

Moments of Crisis

I wrote a significant part of this dissertation in the midst of what can truly be called a historic moment. Below, I describe two crises that were at the forefront of the interviews I conducted with teachers in the summer of 2020 and that contextualize the themes and ideas articulated in this dissertation. I begin with the COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent financial crash, concluding with the Black Lives Matter protests that called for a deep reckoning with institutionalized racism and an unjust social order.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Financial Crisis

I finished transcribing the first set of interviews in the second week of March 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic erupted. As stories about the deadly virus and the ensuing economic fallout of global financial markets flooded my newsfeed, my apartment echoed with the voices of teachers who participated in this study. Replaying the recorded conversations from a few months back, I heard teachers worry about the lack of curricular attention to looming crises: climate crises, inequality crises, injustice crises—topics that appear in Chapter Five. While recognizing that we need to teach students to live for the world as it is constructed, teachers also argued that a personal finance approach alone was insufficient in preparing students to meet the challenges that lay ahead. They lamented the preoccupation with financial literacy education as a way for young people to, as one participant put it, “survive austerity” rather than develop the critical capacities to think about broader structural changes that are needed in the economy.

I began the core data analysis phase in the first few weeks of the crisis. Each day brought with it more news of illness, death, panic, mass unemployment, lockdowns, and suffering. As disasters often do, it also laid bare the inequalities and injustices of our current social, political, and economic structures. Parts of the economy came to a standstill, and the vulnerability of our current system was once again on full display. As entire sectors and industries closed down in the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not the wealthy and powerful who sustained us, as proceeds the popular trickle-down economics line of thinking, but working people. Grocery store clerks, hospital staff, teachers, utility workers, and delivery drivers, among many others, kept society running for everyone else. Suddenly, workers who are most undervalued in society became essential and their jobs critical to keeping the rest of us afloat (Stanford, 2020).

At the same time, it was business as usual for the rich and powerful as they exploited the catastrophe to their own benefit, looting the system and amassing immense wealth (Collins et al., 2020; Reich, 2020; TaxCOOP, 2020). United States senator, Richard Burr, for example, apparently used his role as chairman of the Senate intelligence committee to get insider information about the severity of the oncoming pandemic and made almost three dozen stock trades worth between \$628,000 and \$1.7 million before the market tanked (Reich, 2020). As over 22 million people in the United States lost their jobs between March 18 and April 10, 2020, bringing the unemployment rate to 15%, U.S. billionaire wealth increased by \$282 billion, an almost 10 percent gain (Collins et al., 2020). In Canada, from March 16 to May 16, 2020 cash donations to help fight the effects of the pandemic from the five wealthiest Canadians represented 0.09% of their wealth while they saw their fortunes climb to US\$64.5 billion, a total increase of more than 9% (TaxCOOP, 2020). The unfolding COVID-19 crisis has as much exposed the magnitude of the massive gulf between the rich and poor as it has deepened it.

Research reveals that COVID-19 disproportionately affects low-income, immigrant, and communities of colour in both Canada and the United States, many of whom are frontline and essential workers, signifying that working remotely is a privilege that cleaves along race and class lines (Cabildo et al., 2020; Choi et al., 2020; Hardy & Logan, 2020).

Protests Against Anti-Black Racism and Police Brutality

As the COVID-19 public health crisis raged on, the crisis of anti-Black racism, a centuries-long reality against which Black activists and communities have been fighting, was beginning to receive the attention it deserved. The 2020 wave of civil rights protests in the United States, sparked by the murder of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, ignited a wave of massive protests globally (Haddad, 2020). The demonstrations spread to cities all over the world by June as people rallied in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement to oppose anti-Black racism and police brutality. These protests, which also took place in Canadian cities, sparked national conversations about the need to acknowledge racism and white supremacy at home, too. If Canadians are familiar with names like Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor, they are less aware of the names of the Black and Indigenous people who lived in Canada and who were killed during interactions with police: Dale Culver, Chantel Moore, Eishia Hudson, Jason Collins, and Regis Korchinski-Paquet, among countless others (J. Brown, 2020). At the same time that public figures such as Ontario Premier Doug Ford claimed that Canada does not have the same “systemic, deep roots” of racism as the United States (The Canadian Press, 2020, para. 1), public conversation about defunding the police gained momentum in cities across North America as people debated redirecting funding from police services to other social services and reducing the presence of police officers entirely (Dawson, 2020).

Looting that took place during the protests in the United States also stirred conversations about who was really doing the plundering. Writing for *The New York Times*, law professor Mehrsa Baradaran (2020) exposed in her article, “The Neoliberal Looting of America,” how neoliberal policies over the last 50 years have led to deregulation in the finance sector, producing perfect conditions for the rise of the private equity industry, which takes over and restructures companies or industries in sectors such as housing, health care, and retail. “In pursuit of maximum returns,” wrote Baradaran (2020), “such firms have squeezed businesses for every last drop of profit, cutting jobs, pensions and salaries where possible” (para. 6). This has led to approximately 1.3 million job losses due to retail bankruptcies and liquidation in the last decade (Baradaran, 2020). In her piece, Baradaran (2020) pointed to the satirical newspaper *The Onion* (2020), which published the following headline amid the protests: “Protesters Criticized For Looting Businesses Without Forming Private Equity Firm First.” *The Onion* (2020) wrote facetiously: “It’s disgusting to put workers at risk by looting. You do it by chipping away at their health benefits and eventually laying them off. There’s a right way and wrong way to do this” (para. 1).

In a video that went viral in June 2020, author Kimberly Jones called for people to stop focusing on what protestors were doing and consider the factors that have led people to protest, riot, and loot (David Jones Media, 2020). Drawing on historical examples, Jones argued powerfully that while Black people were brought to the United States to be exploited for their labour, they have never been compensated for their enslavement (David Jones Media, 2020). Using the allegory of a game of Monopoly, Jones illustrated how the system has been fixed against Black people and how white people have broken the social contract time and again (David Jones Media, 2020). Jones provided several historical examples including the 1921 Tulsa

Race Massacre in Oklahoma, where Black businesses were thriving but mobs of white residents attacked Black homes and burned business down to the ground (David Jones Media, 2020).

While the surging divide between the rich and poor has been a topic of interest in public and political discourse since the Occupy Movement, the dimension of racial wealth disparities has not been as prominent. As the Black Lives Matter protests spread, discussions of reparations and the racial wealth gap began to receive long awaited attention.

The Consolation of Philosophy

At the time of the first interviews and the focus groups, which respectively took place in the summer and fall of 2019, participants could not have predicted the global outbreak of COVID-19, the financial crash, or the mass protests that marked 2020. As I transcribed and listened to our conversations from the previous year in the midst of the havoc that the virus was wreaking around the globe in March of 2020, teachers' warnings sounded foreboding. The ongoing events were only bringing to life the ideas from the interviews I was poring over: that the financial system has been failing people long before the current crisis; that personal finance literacy was inadequate and a carefully strewn budget was useless in the wake of such massive and unprecedented economic and human loss; that political understandings and a critical economic literacy were vital in the face of the approaching set of crises; that there were limits to individual action, and solidarity was deeply needed to weather the impending storms.

At the same time, the recorded conversations brought respite from the social isolation that I was now practicing with my entire community and eventually with most of the world. Immersing myself in this research, its ideas, the texts from which I draw, and the wisdom imparted by the participants brought consolation and hope in the midst of uncertainty. The

COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath were absolutely devastating, taking, at the time of writing, three million lives worldwide and causing irreparable damage to the wellbeing of millions of people around the world. At the same time that the crisis brought about overwhelming changes to how we conduct our lives as well as unspeakable suffering to individuals, families, and communities around the globe, people also began contemplating a better world, dreaming of better times ahead.

In Italy, one of the nations worst hit in the early days of the pandemic, to keep their spirits up and fill the silence of the streets under quarantine, people began singing and playing instruments on their balconies alongside their neighbours (Taladrid, 2020). Across the world, people turned to the arts and concerts, films, and other performances were made available to viewers for free (Gotrich, 2020). The value of making the arts—usually the first to be cut in times of austerity—publicly available and the healing power of music, dance, and theatre as crucial to our lives became evident. Some of us awakened from the elusive American dream to realize that hard work is not enough and a strong social safety net is vital to our wellbeing (e.g., Vizek, 2020).

Likewise, government action through economic stimulus and response plans in societies such as Canada and the United States showed that economic restructuring and wealth redistribution are possible once a problem is deemed an emergency (CBC News, 2020; Kelton, 2020). Referring to social issues such as homelessness, unaffordable housing, and criminal justice, U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez explained that the pandemic has revealed the millions of people who have existed in states of crisis for decades but who have been ignored:

It's a fascinating progressive moment because what it's shown is that all of these issues have never been about "how are you going to pay for it?" It's never been about whether

we have the capacity to do these things or if the logistics have worked out. All of these excuses that we have been given as to why we cannot treat people humanely have suddenly gone up in smoke and what has been revealed is that all of these issues were really about a lack of political will and who you deemed worthy to be in an emergency or not. (Kelton, 2020, paras. 5–6)

Other experts weighed in about the fundamental ways in which the world could transform post-coronavirus pandemic and its accompanying economic recession, hoping for the de-escalation of political polarization, renewed faith in experts and the public good, maybe even a turn away from hyper-individualism and market supremacy (Politico Magazine, 2020).

The rest of this dissertation undertakes precisely these themes as they relate to the critical teaching of financial literacy: critical thought, economic justice, resistance, and hope.

Chapter Summary

This chapter portrayed the political climate in Ontario and the reforms that took place under the Progressive Conservative government. I described the teacher strikes of 2019 and youth political organizing in support of teachers and climate action that occurred during the same period. I then moved on to discuss the public perception of financial literacy education and the results of the province-wide public consultation of 2018. Next, I recounted the failed attempt to remove the mandatory *Civics and Citizenship* course from the Ontario curriculum to make space for financial literacy education in 2016. Turning to Québec, I outlined the various immigration and religious discrimination reforms in the province that marked 2019. Focusing on the new secondary *Financial Education* course, I described the response it received in Québec when it was introduced in 2017. I concluded with the various crises and social movements that transpired

in 2020, including the COVID-19 pandemic and public health crisis, the global economic downturn that followed, and the Black Lives Matter protests against anti-Black racism and the carceral state. This chapter contextualizes the findings of this research and sets up the themes that I return to throughout the course of this dissertation.

Chapter Three: Neoliberal Ideology and Pedagogy of Resistance

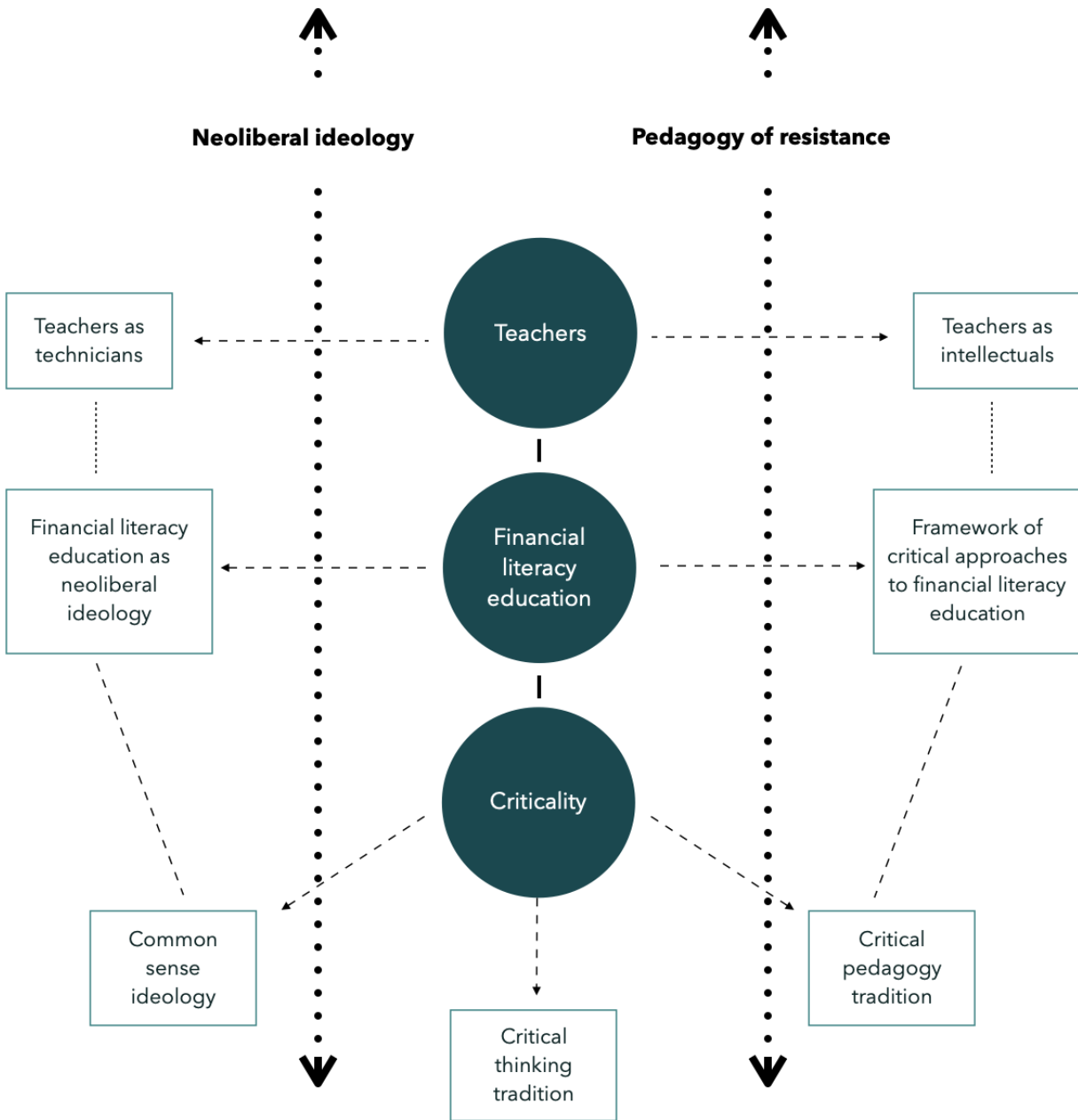
It is, indeed, advisable that the teacher should understand, and even be able to criticize, the general principles upon which the whole educational system is formed and administered. He is not like a private soldier in an army, expected merely to obey, or like a cog in a wheel, expected merely to respond to and transmit external energy; he must be an intelligent medium of action.

– James Alexander McLellan and John Dewey, *The psychology of number and its applications to methods of teaching arithmetic*

The conceptual framework I construct in this chapter includes the key concepts and theories that inform the study as well as the relationships among them. I use Maxwell's (2013) model for a conceptual framework, which is a conception or model of the phenomena that is under investigation and a tentative theory of what is going on and why. The conceptual framework also incorporates a critical literature review in that more than reviewing and describing the existing literature on the topic, I outline the problems and contradictions within it and look at alternative ways of framing the issues (Maxwell, 2013). The conceptual framework (see Figure 1, below) looks at research and scholarship on three main concepts that comprise the research problem: the beliefs and practices of *teachers* who take a *critical* approach to *financial literacy education*. There are two through-lines connecting these concepts. One is the recurring theme of neoliberal ideology and how it positions teachers, financial literacy education, and criticality in teaching and learning. The second is the pedagogy of resistance to neoliberal ideology as manifested in the literature on teachers as intellectuals, critical financial literacy education, and criticality. Within this framework, I also address tensions, such as those addressing the varying conceptions of what it means to be “critical.”

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Note. This conceptual framework shows the relationship among the main concepts and theories informing the study.

In Part I, I focus on the left side of the diagram, beginning with a brief history of neoliberalism followed by a discussion of its influence on education. Next, I discuss teacher

professional autonomy under neoliberalism and how financial literacy education both epitomizes and perpetuates neoliberal thought. I then argue that in emphasizing the role of teachers as technicians, current research on teachers who teach financial literacy education further highlights the neoliberal turn in education and educational research. In Part II, I look at how neoliberal versions of financial literacy education have been challenged, beginning with a framework that summarizes how critical scholars have reconceptualized financial literacy education in response to mainstream versions. I argue, also, that this study remedies a major deficit in the literature on critical approaches to financial literacy education having to do with the lack of empirical research with teachers. I then examine ideas about criticality by locating them within the traditions of critical thinking and critical pedagogy, also exploring the place of common sense thinking in these classifications. Last, I discuss the role of teachers as transformative intellectuals and civic agents.

Part I: Financial Literacy Education in a Neoliberal Context

Neoliberalism, A Brief History

Neoliberalism has been referred to as a “loose and shifting signifier,” (W. Brown, 2015, p. 20), a concept that is “oft-invoked but ill-defined” (Mudge, 2008, p. 703). Its taxonomies show that neoliberalism’s sprawling definitions are often in contradiction with each other and that the term frequently functions as a rhetorical trope: an all-purpose denunciatory category that is ubiquitous, deployed in critiques as diffuse as reality television and contemporary university management (Flew, 2014). Despite its nebulous nature and all-encompassing tendencies, neoliberalism as a theoretical framework offers a set of valuable tools for critique of dominant economic and political forces, particularly their implications for education. To understand what

is meant by the term neoliberalism, I draw from David Harvey's (2011) account, which concerns itself with the proliferation of neoliberalism as the dominant ideology on the world stage and its distinct mechanisms. It is important to note, however, that while Harvey's (2011) account is illuminative, the patterns identified by Harvey globally expresses themselves variously at the national level and over different administrations because neoliberalism is always in flux across contexts, settings, and states (Hursh et al., 2015). Consequently, the conditions that apply in a neoliberal state such as the United States may look different from those in Canada and further vary from region to region as well as under changing governments.

Harvey (2011) defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p. 2). In its veneration of markets, neoliberal doctrine "holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (Harvey, 2011, p. 3). Since the 1970s, argues Harvey (2011), there has been a mounting prominence of neoliberalism globally, marked by "deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision" (p. 3). Beginning with leaders such as Deng Xiaoping in China, Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain, and Ronald Reagan in the United States, neoliberal policies have transformed the world's social and economic history, and neoliberalism has been embraced as "the central guiding principle of economic thought and management" (Harvey, 2011, p. 2). Some states over the last forty years have adopted neoliberal theory and adjusted political-economic practices voluntarily, whereas others have done so under coercive pressures (Harvey, 2011). The result, nevertheless, has been neoliberalism's ascension to a global hegemonic mode

of discourse, infiltrating key state and international institutions including education, and being incorporated into “the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (Harvey, 2011, p. 3).

“The main substantive achievement of neoliberalization,” writes Harvey (2011), “has been to redistribute, rather than to generate, wealth and income,” through the mechanisms of “accumulation by dispossession.” A set of practices, accumulation by dispossession comprises four main features (Harvey, 2011). First is the privatization and commodification of public assets that transfer capital accumulation from the public realm to private and class-privileged interests. These assets include public utilities (e.g., water, transportation), social welfare provisions (e.g., education, healthcare, housing), and public institutions (e.g., universities, prisons), among others (Harvey, 2011). Under neoliberalism, hard won common property rights from generations of class struggle such as the right to state pension and national health care have been dangerously eroded. Commodification has occurred when regulatory frameworks designed to protect labour and natural resources, for instance, have been rolled back in favour of capital-intensive modes of agricultural production, resulting in habitat degradation and the exploitation of the global environmental commons (e.g., land, water, air) (Harvey, 2011).

The second signal feature of neoliberalism has been the “financialization of everything” whereby finance has seized all other areas of the economy, state apparatus, and daily life (Harvey, 2011, p. 33). Fueled by deregulation, the financial system has become a main centre of redistributive activity through “speculation, predation, fraud, and thievery” (Harvey, 2011, p. 161), which has led to fast fortunes amassed by economic elites at the expense of ordinary citizens’ livelihoods. Once financialization takes hold, the third process of accumulation by dispossession occurs. As the crises of the 1980s and 1990s in Latin America and Asia show, debt

crises are “orchestrated, managed, and controlled both to rationalize the system and to redistribute assets” from poor countries to wealthy ones (Harvey, 2011, p. 162). Finally, under neoliberalization, the state becomes the primary agent of distributive policies but unlike its predecessor, the welfare state, the neoliberal state shifts resources in the direction of economic elites. Wealth is redistributed from lower to upper classes through, for example, privatization schemes that eliminate affordable housing and displace low-income populations, revisions in the tax code that benefit returns on investment rather than incomes and wages, and corporate welfare programmes where public moneys are redirected for corporate benefit such as the case of direct government subsidies to agribusiness (Harvey, 2011).

Neoliberal Education

In a neoliberal world, education, too, is subject to an economic rationality that prioritizes the norms of efficiency, cost-benefit analysis, and maximization of personal gain (Apple, 1999). This economic rationality translates into “a vision of students as human capital,” who “as future workers, must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently” in an intensely ruthless economy (Apple, 1999, p. 204). Schools are placed into the market, and education is viewed as another product that can be bought through vouchers and choice plans by citizens who are consumers and purchasers (Apple, 1999, p. 204). Corporatocracy, which thrives in neoliberal conditions and concentrates power in the hands of government as well as major corporations and banks, positions schools as businesses and young people as products to be taught content and skills that are needed by the nation-state and the economy (Sleeter, 2008). Skills and habits that make students more effective consumers, investors, and workers are valued over those that prepare them for civic and political life (Arthur, 2012a; Haiven, 2017; Nichols,

2017; Sleeter, 2008). Public schooling has been especially susceptible to the effects of neoliberalism through reforms promoting high-stakes testing, standardization, accountability, and competition (Attick, 2017; Hursh, 2007; Mathison & Ross, 2002; Schuetze et al., 2011); the privatization and marketization of education through school choice (Baltodano, 2012; Bosetti & Gereluk, 2016; Hill & Kumar, 2012); corporate influence in schools (Lipman, 2011; Ross & Gibson, 2006); cutbacks in expenditures on public education and public services (Ball, 2012; Sattler, 2012); attacks on the teaching profession and teacher unions (Bocking, 2020; Compton et al., 2008); as well as educational trends that place both blame and success primarily on individuals rather than systems (Picower, 2013).

Teacher Professional Autonomy under Neoliberalism

Writing with Canadian educator James Alexander McLellan at the end of the 19th century, education philosopher John Dewey (1895) proposed that teachers “should understand, and even be able to criticize, the general principles upon which the whole educational system is formed and administered,” for they are not like cogs “in a wheel, expected merely to respond to and transmit external energy” (p. 14-15). Yet, a century later, Henry Giroux (1988) wrote that educational reforms displayed “little confidence in the ability of public school teachers to provide intellectual and moral leadership for our nation’s youth” (p. 121). In ignoring the role of teachers in preparing students to be “active and critical citizens” as well as disregarding teachers’ “intelligence, judgement and experience” in the debates on educational change, educational reforms reduced teachers to “the status of high-level technicians carrying out dictates and objectives decided by experts far removed from the everyday realities of classroom life” (Giroux, 1988, p. 121). The tendency to reduce teachers to this status is what Giroux (1988) terms “the

proletarianization of teacher work,” whereby the function of teaching becomes one of “managing and implementing curricular programs rather than developing or critically appropriating curricula to fit specific pedagogical concerns” (p. 122). The routinization of learning and classroom pedagogy deskills teachers by distancing them from “the processes of deliberation and pedagogy,” while “a back-to-basics format” and “time-on-task” pedagogies operate from the assumption that “*all* students can learn from the same materials, classroom instructional techniques and modes of evaluation” (Giroux, 1988, p. 125). Today, Giroux (2017) argues, contemporary conservative reform efforts continue to deskill and demean teachers pressuring them to assume “mercenary” and “instrumental” roles that leave them with little time for creativity, collaboration with colleagues, or pedagogy that does not teach to the test (p. 16).

Just like their students, contend Apple and Beane (2007), teachers and other professional educators “have a right to experience and a responsibility to enact the democratic way of life in schools” (p. 20). One way in which teachers can enact this right is to exercise meaningful control over their professional work by creating the curriculum, choosing appropriate resources, and selecting the kind of instructional practices that are relevant to the particular students with which they work (Apple & Beane, 2007, pp. 20–21). Yet, as Apple and Beane (2007) note, the deskilling and deprofessionalization of teachers amidst the centralization and standardization of curriculum have eroded this right and have served as examples of how democracy has been dissolving in schools. With evidence from three case studies from Canada, the United States, and Mexico, Bocking (2020) argues that a key dimension of the neoliberal shift in education in the 21st century has been the undermining of teachers’ control over their work along with the retrenchment of workers’ rights, the precariousness of employment, and the weakening of labour unions. Bocking (2020) reasons that as the “quality” of an education system is increasingly

defined by purportedly objective “quantitative metrics administered from the top-down,” the need for “teachers with the autonomy and expertise to adapt broad curriculum guidelines to the specific needs of their students” is negated (p. 4).

Professional autonomy, as defined by Bocking (2020), refers to “the capacity and freedom of teachers to exercise their judgment in interpreting broad curriculum guidelines established by the state into their day-to-day classroom activities” (p. 4). As highly trained and experienced professionals, Bocking (2020) argues, teachers exercise their autonomy by making pedagogical decisions regarding instruction and evaluation and how much emphasis to place on curriculum objectives, selecting content and resources, and building rapport with students. Apart from subject-area knowledge and pedagogy, a critical area for teachers is emotional intelligence. Teachers must effectively meet the unique needs of groups of students and interpret policy and curricula in a way that is meaningful for them (Bocking, 2020). Unfortunately, teachers’ autonomy has been compromised by a neoliberal rationality through the following: 1) changes in governance that result in the centralization of power at higher levels (for example, power transfers from local school boards to the provincial government); 2) policies that shift workplace power relations between principals and teachers from a collegial model to a manager-employee hierarchy; 3) the effects of standardized testing on teachers’ capacities to exercise professional judgment; 4) an increase in “school choice,” whereby schools compete for enrolment and funding that is based on publicly available standardized test scores; and 5) the response of unions to these changes and the extent to which they have acquiesced or resisted (Bocking, 2020).

The teaching profession additionally suffers from intense public and political scrutiny. In her book, *The Teacher Wars*, Dana Goldstein (2015) describes the recurring phenomenon of a moral panic in American history “whereby policy makers and the media focus on a single class

of people (in our case, veteran public school teachers) as emblems of a large, complex social problem (socioeconomic inequality, as evidenced by educational achievement gaps)” (p. 5). Goldstein (2015) writes: “Today the ineffective tenured teacher has emerged as a feared character, a vampiric type who sucks tax dollars into her bloated pension and health care plans, without much regard for the children under her care” (p. 5). In Canada, hostility towards the teaching profession has been particularly evident in the province of Ontario beginning with the Common Sense Revolution, a period marked by massive spending cuts and major education reforms after Mike Harris of the Progressive Conservative Party was elected premier in 1995 (J. B. Rose, 2003). During this time, the government pushed a legislative assault on teacher bargaining that resulted in anti-union sentiment and teacher bashing, reflecting public concerns about the quality and cost of public education and perceptions of teachers as overpaid and underworked (J. B. Rose, 2003). The devaluation of teachers in the province is well depicted in a response to Ontario teacher Misha Abarbanel’s (2013) article to Bill 115 (Putting Students First Act), in which Arabnel discusses the bill’s implications for teacher compensation, democracy, and educational outcomes. Responses to the piece from the public include laments about teachers having “summers off,” being “over paid, overly benefited, under worked,” as well as exhibiting “poor judgement” and being “in the job for the money” (Abarbanel, 2013, pp. 48–49). Less diplomatically put characterizations portray teachers as “a scourge,” “spoiled brats,” and “greedily self-righteous” (Abarbanel, 2013, pp. 48–49).

That teachers are routinely the subject of public derision is unsurprising since historically, the teaching profession has occupied a low status in society, and teacher education programs have been perceived as the least prestigious among the ranks of the university hierarchy (Goldstein, 2015; Goodlad, 1999; Kane, 2007; Labaree, 2004). Kane (2007), for

instance, describes the challenges in having research on teacher education taken seriously as “real research” among dominant traditions in the academy. In recent years, criticisms against the teaching profession from conservative media have targeted the social justice orientations of schools of education in the United States (Cochran-Smith, 2006). Canadian education has been vulnerable to similar attacks, evidenced by think pieces such as Maclean’s “Why are schools brainwashing our children?” which questions whether “the new ‘social justice’ agenda in class” is pushing politics at the expense of learning (Reynolds, 2012, para. 1). Most notably, social justice education received significant pushback in 2015 during the heated debate over Ontario’s newly revised health and physical education curriculum that included updated teaching expectations for sexual health and human development (Bialystok, 2019), which I described in Chapter Two (see “Snitch lines”). Against accusations that education for social justice is academically weak and too “political,” Cochran-Smith (2006) argues that social justice education is not mutually exclusive with high academic quality. In fact, social justice educators pursue sophisticated and high level learning because “in addition to learning ‘the facts,’ this kind of learning includes unpacking the assumptions and values that shape the facts, evaluating the evidence for competing claims, and being unafraid of critique” (Cochran-Smith, 2006, p. 198). All education is political and social justice education is especially well equipped to convey that knowledge is neither neutral nor objective but that it reflects various relations of power in society—this kind of education itself not being exempt from such critiques (Applebaum, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2006).

Financial Literacy Education and Neoliberalism

Financial Literacy Education, A Brief History. Financial literacy originated in consumer education and home economics (Arthur, 2012c; Chamberlin, 1978), but the term blossomed in use in U.S. education journals and popular personal finance self-help books in the late 1990s (Faulkner, 2015). It was not until the 2008 financial crisis, however, that financial literacy became prominent in public consciousness as U.S. media, government, and library science literature started publishing shock value statistics on the financial state of Americans (Faulkner, 2015). While the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has been at the forefront of efforts for G20 countries to develop tailored financial education strategies and programmes since 2002, financial literacy gained international recognition as a critical life skill for individuals in the aftermath of the global financial crisis (OECD, 2011; Pinto, 2016). In Canada, the negative economic effects of the financial crisis were less pronounced than in other OECD countries, but the overt connections made by governments and the media between the state of the economy and the need for financial literacy among citizens led to the development of financial literacy education policy across the nation (Pinto, 2013b, 2016).

In 2009, the Canadian government established a national Task Force on Financial Literacy, headed by Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, with the aim to develop a national strategy to strengthen Canadians' financial literacy (Pinto, 2016; Schwartz, 2011). A year later, the task force released a report, *Canadians and Their Money: Building a Brighter Financial Future*, in which it defined financial literacy as "the knowledge, skills and confidence to make responsible financial decisions" and recommended that provincial ministries of education be responsible for developing financial literacy education programming (Pinto, 2016; Task Force on Financial Literacy, 2010, p. 10). In 2011, following the recommendations of the Task Force, the Ontario

Ministry of Education released two policy documents: *Financial Literacy, Grades 4–8: Scope and Sequence of Expectations* and *Financial Literacy, Grades 9–12: Scope and Sequence of Expectations*. (Pinto, 2016). These documents identified already existing curriculum expectations in Ontario’s official curriculum that were directly or indirectly connected to financial literacy (Pinto, 2016). Today, calls for more financial literacy education continue. In June in 2020, Premier Doug Ford announced that the province’s new elementary math curriculum would include financial literacy beginning in the first grade (Government of Ontario, 2020). In Québec in 2017, financial literacy education was introduced into the secondary curriculum through a standalone mandatory course, *Financial Education*, replacing half of the geopolitical course *Contemporary World* (Lefrançois et al., 2017) (see Chapter Two).

Financial Literacy Education in the Mainstream. A tenuous concept, *financial literacy* is used interchangeably in the literature and media with terms such as *financial competence*, *financial ability*, *financial capability*, *financial knowledge*, and *financial education* (Huston, 2010; Stieger & Jekel, 2019). Among scholars, policy officials, financial experts, and consumer advocates the term *financial literacy* has varying conceptual definitions ranging among knowledge of concepts, ability to communicate about concepts, aptitude in managing finances, skill in decision-making, and confidence in financial planning (Remund, 2010). Furthermore, a lack of consensus exists on operational definitions outlining how to measure the degree to which one is financially literate (Remund, 2010). In addition to problems regarding imprecision in defining terms and constructs used for measurement, numerous studies have also produced evidence of the inefficacy of financial literacy education. The most comprehensive of these, Fernandes, Lynch, and Netemeyer’s (2014) meta-analysis of the relationship between financial literacy (or financial education) and financial behaviors in 168 papers covering 201 prior studies,

demonstrates that interventions to improve financial literacy explain only 0.1% of the variance. Amagir et al.'s (2017) systematic review of literature on financial literacy education programs or interventions in schools reveals that studies measuring the effects of financial education on children's and adolescents' actual financial behavior are limited and show almost no effect. Specifically looking at mandated high school personal finance courses, Cole, Paulson, and Shastry (2016) find that such courses have not affected financial outcomes of treated populations in a measurable way.

Despite the various methodological issues and the numerous studies discrediting its usefulness, the data acquired in research studies continues to be used to promote financial literacy, demonstrating financial literacy education's ideological sway (Pinto, 2013b; Stieger & Jekel, 2019; Willis, 2009). Financial literacy education's ascent can partly be explained by Mehta's (2013) theory that paradigms (worldviews or ideas) have the power to shape politics. According to Mehta (2013), policy arguments are fought at the level of problem definition, so "the way a problem is framed has significant implications for the types of policy solutions that will seem desirable" (p. 291). As Pinto (2013b) and Willis (2009) document, policymakers across the political spectrum in both Canada and the United States following the 2008 collapse defined financial illiteracy as the common problem, proposing financial literacy education as its solution. The OECD (2013)—the group that recommended governments develop financial education programmes and integrate financial literacy education into school curricula in the aftermath of the crisis—declared that in both industrialized and emerging economies a "lack of financial literacy was one of the factors contributing to ill-informed financial decisions" (p. 140). Once financial literacy gathered momentum, curriculum policymakers adopted a similar rhetoric. For example, a Maryland 2016 state curriculum document—referring to the financial crisis,

overwhelming debt, and foreclosures—concluded that “the events of the last decade point to the need for a more focused approach to personal finance instruction for students” (Maryland State Department of Education, 2010, p. 8).

Given the OECD’s influential role in shaping education policy worldwide, conventional approaches to financial literacy education in the context of this research are conceptualized according to the OECD’s (2016) definition:

knowledge and understanding of financial concepts and risks, and the skills, motivation, and confidence to apply such knowledge and understanding in order to make effective decisions across a range of financial contexts, to improve the financial well-being of individuals and society, and to enable participation in economic life. (p. 85)

In terms of the content of conventional financial literacy education, Huston’s (2010) analysis of the constructs used in research reveals four distinct personal finance content areas: 1) money basics (including time value of money, purchasing power, personal financial accounting concepts); 2) borrowing (i.e., bringing future resources into the present through the use of credit cards, consumer loans or mortgages); 3) investing (i.e., saving present resources for future use through the use of saving accounts, stocks, bonds or mutual funds); and 4) protecting resources (either through insurance products or other risk management techniques) (p. 303). *The National Standards for Financial Literacy* (Council for Economic Education, 2013) curriculum document in the United States groups these concepts along similar lines: 1) earning income; 2) buying goods and services; 3) saving; 4) using credit; 5) financial investing; and 6) protecting and insuring (p. iii). Mainstream financial literacy education thus focuses mainly on individual and personal finance management, discounting “the social and political of financial problems and the possibility of public solutions” (Maier et al., 2014, p. 79).

Financial Literacy Education as Neoliberal Ideology. A consensus exists among critical scholars that in its endorsement of individual responsibility, meritocracy, and radical “self-reliance” (Tuominen & Thompson, 2015, p. 164), mainstream financial literacy education both epitomizes and perpetuates neoliberal ideology. For example, Tamir and Davidson (2019) regard the push to implement financial literacy programs as shaped by neoliberal ideas and assumptions that view “free trade, markets with minimal government involvement, and competition as the best way to achieve economic prosperity for corporations, individuals and society more generally” (p. 2). Financial literacy education then, suggest Hütten et al. (2018), can be seen as a way to prepare for what Hacker (2019) calls “the great risk shift” that characterizes 21st century capitalism. Individuals are expected to insure themselves and their families against risks once managed and pooled by collective bodies such as the state and trade unions by increasingly turning to private insurance mechanisms within financial markets (Hacker, 2019).

As austerity measures reduce any possibility of a safety net, they work in tandem with financial literacy education and should be viewed, according to Arthur (2011), “as two sides of the same neoliberal coin” (p. 205). On their own insufficient, austerity policies need the working class to consent to the rollback on public spending and extensive cuts to social programs (Arthur, 2011). While financial literacy education initiatives and resources appear to be solutions “to give the devastated working class the tools to survive in this changed world,” instead they aid “in building a habitus that eschews collective risk management solutions and acquiesces or welcomes further austerity” (Arthur, 2011, p. 205). In the same vein, Clarke (2015) argues that there is a natural fit between the framework of economic resilience embedded within financial literacy education and neoliberal statecraft. A form of neoliberal governance, resilience discourse

positions political agency within individuals themselves rather than in state capacity. In response to economic crises, financial literacy education appears to serve as a coping strategy that makes people more resilient in the face of inevitable market failures (Clarke, 2015). At the same time, in positioning financial crashes as inevitable, the profoundly contradictory elements of neoliberal discourse become evident: market-conforming behaviour endorsed by financial literacy education cannot ultimately guarantee economic well-being for its subjects; recipients of financial literacy education are thus effectively “instructed to learn to fail” (Clarke, 2015, p. 271). Santos (2017) argues that these inherent contradictions in financial literacy education programmes may “jeopardise the goal of improving individual financial decisions through education,” but “the ideological goal of these initiatives is not compromised” since improved decision-making is not the sole goal of the financial education agenda (p. 410). More relevant, claims Santos (2017), is “the ideological objective of cultivating the values of self-reliance and willingness to bear risks required for the extension of neoliberal financialised market society” (p. 416).

Hamilton and Darity (2017) argue that neoliberal ideology, which places the onus on individual actions and leads to deficit perspectives of racialized and other stigmatized workers, underlies popular narratives around individual agency, education, and financial literacy. While conventional wisdom suggests that education and individual hard work within unfettered markets is the panacea to the racial wealth gap, Hamilton and Darity (2017) document the ways in which the racial economic divide is rooted in socioeconomic and political structure barriers. The authors contend that it is not poor decision-making or deficient knowledge on the part of Black Americans but the deep-seated structures within economic arrangements such as inheritance and intergenerational wealth transfers from which Whites benefit that perpetuate racism and

inequality (Hamilton & Darity, 2017). Defining the central problem as a matter of personal and human capital investment instead of labour market conditions and structures, however, rationalizes laissez-faire austerity policies on the basis that it would be irresponsible to “*misallocate* resources to *irresponsible* individuals and, at worst, create dependencies that further fuel irresponsible behavior” (Hamilton & Darity, 2017, p. 68).

Of the studies tracing the neoliberal agenda underpinning financial literacy education, several report on the specific resources available to educators. Pinto and Coulson (2011), for instance, detail in their analysis of popular Canadian financial literacy curriculum resources how neoliberal language of choice ignores the gendered nature of wealth accumulation. Women’s choices and their self-determination are constrained by, for example, the existence of unpaid reproductive and domestic labour or economic policies that lead to gendered wage disparities (Pinto & Coulson, 2011). Furthermore, discourses of value-neutrality in financial literacy curriculum resources position the formulas associated with good financial behavior as universal and linear, ignoring difference and reinforcing gender-blindness (Pinto & Coulson, 2011). Hütten et al. (2018) similarly criticize the idea of *literacy* “as something universal and neutral.” For Hütten et al. (2018), “literacy is no neutral tool but an intrusive technology infused with a particular understanding of the functioning of finance and financial markets,” and advocates of mainstream financial literacy education fail to reflect on its constructed nature (p. 280).

Haiven’s (2017) case study of financial literacy educational materials targeting financially precarious Indigenous people in British Columbia, Canada, shows how these normalize, individualise, and render “invisible the effects of the intertwined system of capitalist neoliberalism and present-day settler colonialism that is, in fact, at the root of the audience’s financial precarity” (p. 349). The case study reveals that such resources produce a profound

neoliberal financial illiteracy that manifests in three ways: an illiteracy of the racialized dimensions of financialization; an illiteracy of various systems of oppression and exploitation on which financialization depends and further reinforces; and an illiteracy to imagining possible alternatives (Haiven, 2017). Blue and Pinto (2017), too, highlight the challenges of charitable organizations' attempts to help people living in poverty in an Indigenous community in Canada. Though their critique is not explicitly focused on neoliberalism, Blue and Pinto's (2017) analysis of the program problematizes the emphasis on individual wealth accumulation that contradicts Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, as well as the feasibility of financial literacy education to solve collective problems such as poverty.

In Israel, Tamir and Davidson (2019) compare a conventional financial program produced by a non-profit organization for use in public education of high school teachers and students to an alternative one created by a for-profit news organization for broader dissemination. To their surprise, Tamir and Davidson (2019) discover that in contextualizing financial products and institutions and exposing the political processes that influence the economic arena, the commercial news organization program holds more critical potential. The authors speculate that this outcome is potentially tied to journalists' increasingly precarious position in Israel's labour market (Tamir & Davidson, 2019). The state sponsored program, on the other hand, embodies neoliberal ideology in the way that, for example, it emphasizes "learning to earn" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7) without broader analysis of political and economic processes or any prospect of civic action aimed at changing the status quo (Tamir & Davidson, 2019).

The neoliberal worldview also extends to empirical research on financial literacy education. For instance, Stieger and Jekel (2019)'s investigation of nine recent scientific

assessment studies of students' economic and financial literacy in Austria shows how research on financial literacy education is steeped in neoliberal ideology. Though the studies in Stieger and Jekel's (2019) sample represent a range of interests and methods, the authors of the studies analysed support an individualistic and apolitical understanding of economic and financial literacy. Specifically, the line of reasoning for these studies reflects neoliberal assumptions that position individuals as "self-enterprising actors" who operate according to principles of competition and ideas about the free market as governed by scientific laws (Stieger & Jekel, 2019). These studies further consider economically and financially literate only those students who accept these underlying neoliberal assumptions, while omitting any analysis of society, power, and politics (Stieger & Jekel, 2019). In the next section, I further elaborate how research on teachers of financial literacy education upholds a similar neoliberal mindset.

Research on Teachers of Financial Literacy Education

Since previous studies of financial literacy education in schools mainly focus on measuring the financial literacy of children and youth (e.g., Amagir et al., 2017; Cole et al., 2016; Mandell & Klein, 2009; OECD, 2016), we know less about teachers in the context of financial literacy education. Akin to studies of youth that narrowly focus on measurement of financial literacy, however, the little extant research on teachers primarily investigates their professional background, preparation, aptitude, and readiness to teach financial literacy (e.g., Godsted & McCormick, 2007; Otter, 2010; Way & Holden, 2009). Studies that examine the beliefs and practices of teachers of financial literacy education rationalize this inquiry on the belief that teachers, as Way and Holden (2009) express, are "pivotal to the implementation and success of personal finance education" (p. 64). Otter (2010), for example, argues that it is "important not only to include teachers in the curriculum development and implementation

process but also to ensure that teachers possess sufficient knowledge to effectively deliver curriculum” (p. 6). Little consideration, however, is given to how teachers understand financial literacy in relation to broader economic and sociopolitical issues, how their understanding influences their pedagogy in the classroom, or the role of students as active learners. In this way, the research assumptions underpinning the available research on teachers of financial literacy education adhere to neoliberal logic by positioning teachers as high-level technicians whose sole responsibilities are to master the subject matter of personal finance education while developing the capacity to deliver this knowledge to students who are—to borrow from Freire (1970/1996)—blank slates. In what follows, I first summarize current research on teachers (and pre-service teachers) of financial literacy education and then highlight a handful of studies that delve into questions beyond evaluating teachers’ preparedness and efficacy in delivering financial literacy instruction.

In the United States, K-12 teachers across various disciplines such as business education, family and consumer sciences, language arts, economics, and mathematics generally support the inclusion of financial literacy education in the curriculum but report experiencing various challenges. These obstacles include inadequate resources, insufficient opportunities to increase their financial literacy knowledge and professional development, as well as a lack of instructional time, specific academic standards to guide teaching, and suitable curriculum (Asiseh & Williams, 2015; Godsted & McCormick, 2007; Otter, 2010; Way & Holden, 2009). Teachers also face discomfort teaching financial literacy (Godsted & McCormick, 2007) and feel they are limited in both content knowledge and pedagogy, although this varies by discipline (Way & Holden, 2009). Almost half of Californian teachers, however, describe themselves as “confident” or “very confident” in their understanding of personal finance concepts (Otter,

2010). The authors of these studies conceptualize financial literacy in the narrow sense of personal finance, asking teachers to reflect on teaching about topics such as banking, budgets, consumer fraud, and cost of living, without attending to the political dimensions of these activities. While Way and Holden's (2009) study is the only one of these to address teachers' personal views in reporting that teachers express concern about their own personal financial well-being (especially regarding retirement income), public policy and economic issues that contextualize these concerns, however, are left unexplored.

Other research on teachers' attitudes towards financial literacy education in the United States includes studies with preservice teachers by Lucey (2008) and Henning and Lucey (2017). Lucey's (2008) research with preservice teachers in a social studies methods course shows that two-hour experiences in which participants researched standards and developed lessons concerning personal finance increased their confidence in teaching. Henning and Lucey (2017) report on an online survey of elementary preservice teachers' and teacher educators' beliefs about and preparedness to teach financial literacy. They find that few preservice teachers had meaningful experiences with personal finance in high school or college, and only 25% believe that it is very important to teach financial literacy in elementary education (Henning & Lucey, 2017). Furthermore, Henning and Lucey (2017) report that nearly 24% of preservice teachers do not view financial literacy as having a justice-oriented component, although the authors do not define what a justice orientation entails.

International research has also primarily focused on assessing teachers' capacity and willingness to teach financial literacy. In Canada, researchers Henderson, Beach, and Coombs (2019) on The Canadian Financial Literacy Project at Queen's University have undertaken an exploratory study examining whether elementary teachers are integrating financial literacy

education into their practice and what kinds of supports are in place. In Belgium, De Moor and Verschete's (2017) survey of final-year secondary teacher education students concludes that the participants in the study show insufficient capacity (financial knowledge, attitude, and behaviour) to adequately teach financial literacy and "to set a good example for their students" (p. 318). Based on their survey with teachers in Singapore, Teo et al. (2011) argue that for teachers to feel empowered to teach financial literacy, they have to see it as a subject that is important and easy to instruct while gaining access to adequate resources, training, and supports (Teo et al., 2011). Sawatzki and Sullivan (2017)'s research in Australia indicates the need for professional learning related to financial literacy education in order to help teachers locate relevant opportunities and interdisciplinary connections in the Australian curriculum (Sawatzki & Sullivan, 2017). None of these studies, however, probe teachers' political understandings of financial literacy education. Instead, the focus is on whether teachers incorporate existing conceptions of mainstream financial literacy education into their pedagogy and how they can be better supported in so doing.

As in the United States, international research on teachers of financial literacy education has conceptualized financial literacy as individual decision-making concerning financial activities such as earning, spending, and saving money. A handful of studies within this body of literature, however, broach issues beyond teacher training and efficacy in teaching personal finance. For example, Leumann's (2017) study of Swiss teachers in vocational education and training shows that while personal finance topics such as budgeting, income and salary, consumer behaviour, and debt are rated as most important by teachers, broader economic and sociopolitical topics such as the financial market or the role of the state in the economy are considered to be of minor importance. Tisdell et al.'s (2013) research on the beliefs and

pedagogy of financial literacy educators of adults from underserved population groups in community-based settings in the United States reports that 95% of the educators believe that the primary purpose of financial education is to help people make informed financial choices. About half indicate that its purpose is also “to help individuals contribute to society” and “to help learners confront financial inequities in their lives and in the community” (Tisdell et al., 2013, p. 343). Though educators in Tisdell et al.’s (2013) study believe that the cultural context and the financial realities of learners’ lives play a role in their curricular and pedagogical choices, their approach is more about connecting to learners’ life experiences rather than challenging structural power relations across difference. For example, the authors note that while several of the educators in the study attend to the disproportionate representation of payday lenders in communities of colour and in poorer communities by teaching about the consequences of dealing with predatory lending in such settings, they do not directly discuss systems of oppression or privilege, the nature of capitalism, or the structure of financial inequities (Tisdell et al., 2013). The educators in this study are thus operating within rather than challenging institutional frameworks (Tisdell et al., 2013).

Other research broaching teachers’ views in relation to the political nature of financial literacy education includes studies in which financial literacy is not the central area of investigation but arises as a topic in relation to other issues. For instance, while Schug et al.’s (2009) survey of U.S. economics teachers does not focus on financial literacy specifically, over 60% of the respondents rank personal finance and consumer education as the most important economics content. In contrast, thinking critically about free market institutions ranks much lower (Schug et al., 2009). In terms of the most important reasons to include economics in the curriculum, 48% of economics teachers choose the objective of forming critically-minded,

reflective citizens as the most important (Schug et al., 2009). The least imperative is developing students to be activists who support economic policies using market-oriented solutions and ones that use the power of government (along with helping students learn about other countries) (Schug et al., 2009). The contradiction between a) placing great importance on the objective of developing critically minded, reflective citizens and b) elevating content on personal finance over content on broader policy solutions to financial insecurity reveals an inclination to view economic critical mindedness in individualistic terms.

Schug et al.'s (2009) study also reveals that economics teachers rely heavily on supplemental teaching materials. This finding is significant in the context of financial literacy education. For the most part, critical approaches to financial literacy education are absent in state and provincial standards (Soroko, 2020), so if teachers are to teach a more expansive version of financial literacy, they would have to turn to outside sources. It is unclear from the literature, however, to what extent teachers are aware of alternative resources and how many of them can envisage a more socially just financial literacy education that extends beyond what is presented in state sanctioned standards. Part of the current study thus explores auxiliary resources that teachers rely on for lessons on critical financial and economic literacy (see Chapter Seven).

Rogers and Westheimer's (2017) large scale study of what U.S. educators teach about economic inequality—or the gap between the rich and poor—is another study that touches on the politics and pedagogy of financial literacy education. Though the research focuses on how educators teach about wealth distribution in society and not personal finance matters, Rogers and Westheimer (2017) find that teachers who report being politically conservative are far more likely than liberal teachers to frame economic inequality in relation to individual behaviour by emphasizing financial literacy. In contrast, self-reported liberal teachers focus instead on racial

and gender inequality as well as normative discussions about the meaning of just and fair societies or just and fair economies (Rogers & Westheimer, 2017). Rogers and Westheimer's (2017) research therefore suggests that teachers' understandings of financial literacy in relation to economic inequality are tied to their political identities.

A few studies on preservice teachers explore participants' understandings of the subject matter in relation to social justice education. Tanase and Lucey's (2017) survey of pre-service K-12 mathematics teachers in two U.S. public universities, for example, finds that most participants are unable to articulate a broad understanding of the interdisciplinary connections among mathematics, financial literacy, and social justice issues. A broad view, according to Tanase and Lucey (2017), entails participants discussing "how mathematics influences financial understanding and how these understandings impact society holistically" and seeing "education as a process that enables justice-oriented visions of society, identifying unjust conditions" (p. 11). However, the majority of pre-service teachers hold largely narrow conceptions of mathematics, unable to realize the relationships between mathematics and financial literacy and their applications for improving society (Tanase & Lucey, 2017). In contrast to Tanase and Lucey's (2017) study of preservice teachers, Lucey, White, and André's (2020) study of K-12 teachers enrolled in a graduate course on social justice education and student diversity shows that teachers are able to identify ways in which financial literacy education connects to social justice. Participants observe that the content in an online curriculum for high school students excludes marginalized groups based on social class, language, and family structure and reinforces assumptions about the United States as a meritocracy (Tanase & Lucey, 2017). At the same time, Tanase and Lucey (2017) note that participants' focus on issues of exclusion and stereotyping

rather than “the unjust nature of the system that creates the curriculum” suggests an area for further examination in critical financial literacy research (p. 19).

Other similar studies examining the cultural relevancy of personal finance content include a study of pre-service teachers by Johnston-Rodriguez and Henning (2019) investigating how special education teachers perceive five different curricula for teaching financial literacy to youth with special needs. The participants in this study assess the curricula using criteria such as whether each curriculum is culturally responsive in that it addresses examples of different occupations such as migrant labor and manufacturing as well as various reasons for earning income such as helping one’s family with various expenses. Johnston-Rodriguez and Henning (2019) report participants finding that instructional materials vary in their ability to meet this criteria and that overall, locating culturally responsive elements in the curriculum is difficult. At the same time, the authors justify their belief in early access to financial literacy education for youth with disabilities on the basis of the “current financial vulnerability of youth and young adults, their rising level of indebtedness, vulnerability to fraud, and increasing tendency to assume larger amounts of debt earlier in life” (Johnston-Rodriguez & Henning, 2019, p. 13). They also summarize research showing the exceptional challenges facing youth with disabilities such as segregated education, poverty, unemployment, and employment with low wages and little opportunity for advancement (Johnston-Rodriguez & Henning, 2019, p. 1). Yet, questions about the appropriateness of individual financial literacy as a path to financial well-being against the backdrop of major structural barriers remain unexplored in this study.

In summary, the existing empirical scholarship on teachers of financial literacy education is mainly limited to research concerning the capacity and effectiveness of teachers to craft and implement financial literacy instruction (e.g., Godsted & McCormick, 2007; Way & Holden,

2009). Scarcely any studies have investigated in-depth how teachers understand and conceptualize financial literacy education, or how they translate their understandings into practice. Issues beyond capacity and effectiveness such as educators' broader conceptions of financial literacy education in the context of power structures remain largely unexamined. To my knowledge and at the time of writing, how teachers challenge or resist dominant understandings of financial literacy education has not been studied. Moreover, the state of research on teachers of financial literacy education further supports the arguments discussed thus far regarding the neoliberal framing of financial literacy education that dominates education and educational research. In focusing on capacity and effectiveness, most studies of financial literacy education treat teachers as high-level technicians tasked with transmitting a body of prefigured knowledge to their students rather than the kind of reflective practitioners that Aronowitz and Giroux (1987), Giroux (1988, 2017), and other critical scholars (e.g., Mirra & Morrell, 2011) contend are necessary for education in a democracy.

Part II: Resisting Neoliberalism in the Context of Financial Literacy Education

If neoliberalism has been the dominant political doctrine and its ideas and discourse have had far-reaching consequences on the institution of education, scholars have also proposed pedagogies of resistance that have served to counter the influence of neoliberal ideology. In this section, I attend to the various ways scholars have challenged neoliberal ideology in research on financial literacy education and teaching.

A Framework of Critical Approaches to Financial Literacy Education

Given the numerous problems with mainstream financial literacy and financial literacy education outlined thus far, critical scholars have called to reform financial literacy education

towards critical ends (e.g., Hütten et al., 2018; Stieger & Jekel, 2019; Tamir & Davidson, 2019). United in the conviction that financial literacy is shaped by and perpetuates neoliberal ideology, critical scholars call for more expansive and critical approaches as a way to counter neoliberal thinking. Few theoretical studies, however, map out what a critical approach would look like in practice. My research thus breaks new ground in the field of critical financial literacy education by documenting how teachers think about and enact this kind of education in their classrooms. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven catalogue in detail teachers' understandings of a critical financial literacy education as well as the skills, knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and resources required for carrying it out. To situate this research within the scholarship on critical financial literacy education, below I summarize the common features within the literature that offers a concrete agenda for critical financial literacy education. While I was familiar with some of the arguments proposed in the studies that I cite below prior to conducting interview with teachers, I developed this framework only after data collection and analysis were completed. The rationale behind this, as I explain in Chapter Four, was to avoid a top-down approach given the concern of this inquiry with positioning teachers as intellectuals. Opting out of using a ready-made framework allowed me to employ my own analytic insights to generate codes and construct themes organically from the data. I was able to compare the framework I developed from the data I collected from teachers in this study with the frameworks I describe below based on the literature I reviewed, contrasts which I discuss in Chapter Eight.

Because critical financial literacy education as a field is relatively new and small in comparison to the wealth of studies on mainstream personal finance education, I draw from studies beyond North America. For the same reason, I present both scholarship concerning formal financial literacy education programs created by the state for the public education system

and scholarship discussing the financial literacy education of the broader public. Table 3, below, summarizes this literature by portraying common features of critical financial literacy approaches. These common features are contrasted with mainstream financial literacy education in order to bring the critical aspects into sharper focus.

Table 3*Common Features of Mainstream versus Critical Approaches to Financial Literacy*

Feature	Mainstream	Critical
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain knowledge and tools to use consumer financial products and services • Navigate and adapt to the financial system as it exists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge and oppose unequal economic structures • Re-imagine and reform the financial system and economic policy by exercising the right to organize, protest, and vote
Position of Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive, reliant, and responsible consumers who adapt to the complexity of finances through knowledgeable consumption • Employees who can compete in the labour market • Individuals who act in their own interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political actors and critical citizens who understand the power structures underlying the economy and recognize their capacity to challenge them • Citizens who have opportunities to debate about financial issues and exercise their civic capacities • Individuals who act as part of a collective
Underlying Logic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial knowledge is objective and apolitical • Individuals are responsible for risk management • The free market is natural, inevitable, and necessary • Individual choice and fixing deficits are the answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial knowledge is socially constructed and reflects various power relations in society • Individuals do not always choose the economics contexts in which they enter this world • Economic risks are socially constructed • Collective decision-making and governments are the answer
Economic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neoclassical economic theory • Neoliberal economics education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-capitalist • Decolonial
Framing of Financial Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahistorical decontextualization of issues that focuses on specific instances and ignores the context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporal and spatial framing of issues that include concrete historical events connected to place
Sponsors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs that promote mainstream financial literacy (e.g., Jump\$tart Coalition) • Commercial banks • Other financial institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activists • Critical NGOs (e.g., Finance Watch) and CSOs concerned with questioning mainstream financial literacy and the financial system • Communities

Critical Financial Literacy. In contrast to the mainstream financial literacy pursued by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), banks, and other institutions seeking to influence “consumer citizens of financial products,” Hütten et al. (2018) propose a critical financial literacy “promoted by activists and more critical NGOs and CSOs [civil society organizations] that seeks to foster political action and intervention” (p. 283). While mainstream financial literacy views the citizen as a consumer who adapts to the complexity of finances through knowledgeable consumption, critical financial literacy positions the citizen as a political actor who challenges the status quo through political intervention (Hütten et al., 2018). In place of accepting only the neoclassical economic model, the political actor embraces diverse economic perspectives, guided by an underlying logic of collective action and debate rather than individual risk management as is the case in mainstream financial literacy frameworks (p. 283).

The underlying understanding of financial knowledge as “objective,” “apolitical” and “a universal remedy” is problematic for Hütten et al. (2018). The authors thus call for an education that presents solutions to social issues beyond “‘proper’ individual financial conduct” (p. 280). For instance, in the case of ensuring wellbeing after retirement, social security is a more viable and cost-effective option next to the kinds of trade-offs between risk and return that individuals have to consider when they plan for retirement savings themselves (Hütten et al., 2018; Willis, 2009). Hütten et al. argue that learning from cases where civil society organizations have acted as a countervailing force against narrow industry interests would help shape a critical financial literacy. One example case study is the regulatory change that occurred after the financial crisis when pro-reform advocates tapped into public sentiment and pressed for increased financial regulation. Learning from cases where civil society organizations were successful in campaigning for change through coalition building, pressuring for policy reform, and

challenging rather than adapting to financial complexities hold potential for what Hütten et al. see as empowering citizens through critical financial literacy.

Critical Civic Approach to Financial Literacy. Tamir and Davidson (2019) introduce an “alternative critical civic approach to financial literacy,” (p. 4) which is “inspired by critical pedagogy that is intended to empower students to identify, understand and oppose unequal economic structures, enabling civic action that would re-imagine the financial system” (p. 2). They argue that a civic and critical approach to financial literacy hails students as citizens, as opposed to passive consumers, with the capacity to act politically to re-shape financial institutions towards ones that serve their needs and reduce the financial risk to which they are subject. Key to the critical civic approach is utilizing not only episodic but also thematic framing to produce concrete frames around social issues. Episodic framing, explain Tamir and Davidson (2019), was evident in mainstream financial news after the 2008 financial crisis when coverage moralized the crisis by blaming the “lazy” and “wasteful” public while absolving powerful political actors and neoliberal policies from responsibility. In this way, the coverage steered away from a thematic framing, which would have attended to the context and underlying causes of the financial crash.

A concrete frame that mixes *both* episodic and thematic frames to enhance understanding of the civic dimension of social problems is therefore one for which Tamir and Davidson (2019) advocate. The concrete frame enhances understanding by exploring specific historical events and describes financial phenomena as “socially embedded concrete objects that have developed historically in response to political struggles and social conflict” rather than as ahistorical or natural (Tamir & Davidson, 2019, p. 8). Along with a temporal dimension, spatial dimensions are crucial to concrete framing of issues. For instance, when it comes to political protests in

economic narratives, the histories of a given place are necessary to understand how the particular conditions there have developed. When concrete representations of political practices such as protests—for example, Occupy Wall Street in New York City—appear in financial narratives, they make clear that economic conditions develop due to the characteristics and histories of a given place (Tamir & Davidson, 2019). Temporal and spatial dimensions signal to financial literacy audiences that citizens have the capacity to resist and change the current financial order by learning from past policies and political actions and working to adapt them.

Critical, Emancipatory Civic Financial Literacy. In response to rationalizing financial literacy on the basis of economic crises, Arthur (2012b) calls for a “critical, emancipatory civic financial literacy that supports deliberation and civic engagement aimed at altering a political economic system which constrains our actions so as to make crises all but inevitable” (p. 164). For Arthur, conventional forms of financial literacy position consumption and investment as legitimate civic acts, individualizing and depoliticizing solutions to longstanding problems such as poverty, insecurity, and inequality (Arthur, 2012a, 2012b). A critical civic financial literacy, in contrast, makes clear that these problems are not the natural result of neutral capitalist forces but that they are embedded within the economic and political systems of capitalism, which creates the conditions for financial crises and shields only certain groups—such as banks deemed “too big to fail”—from its worst effects (Arthur, 2012b). Additionally, a critical civic financial literacy makes clear that austerity measures are deliberate and neither necessary nor the only political options to address the consequences of economic crises (Arthur, 2012b).

In critical financial literacy education, inquiry, argues Arthur (2012b), ought to be rooted in young people’s experiences and opportunities to analyse how students’ “actions reproduce, negotiate or are devalued and/or influenced by unequal social, political and economic relations of

power” (p. 171). The topics analyzed should themselves be subject to questioning and critiqued for what they exclude (Arthur, 2012b). Along with reflection and debate, however, students must have opportunities to exercise their civic capacities so that they not only question the economic order but also effect change in the direction of greater equality and democracy (Arthur, 2012b). One example are service-learning initiatives—combining community service with civic action—where students would study, for instance, which classed, racialized, and gendered groups are most at risk of food insecurity (Arthur, 2012b). Investigating how government policies and market forces impact the health of these populations, students can then disseminate findings to the public, relevant governmental organizations, and state officials (Arthur, 2012b).

Reasonable, Just, and Sustainable Financial Literacy Education Practices. Although Blue (2019) writes about financial literacy education in the context of adult populations, the framework Blue develops is applicable to reframing the curriculum at the secondary level, too. Blue argues that socially just approaches to teaching financial literacy recognize that learning about finances does not equate to acquiring money, and that further, financial well-being is at present only available to a small group of individuals. Sustainable and inclusive financial literacy education practices also benefit participants from disadvantaged backgrounds and do so without causing harms to those who may, for instance, blame themselves entirely for their unfavourable financial situations (Blue, 2019). Furthermore, acknowledging structural and systemic inequities and developing resources in a specific community, for the particular financial dilemmas faced, and with individuals from that community are also ways to make financial literacy education more just and sustainable (Blue, 2019).

Critically Compassionate Approaches. A critically compassionate approach to financial literacy that represents a moral pursuit is one for which Lucey (2018) and Lucey, Agnello, and

Laney (2015) advocate. This framework is based on the following ideals: self-compassion that involves psychological peace and stems from a sense of security, trust, and respect for oneself; this sense of security is reinforced by community and compassion shared with others; and the inner sense of trust is independent of material wealth (Lucey et al., 2015). Further underlying the critically compassionate approach are the ideas that “individuals do not choose the contexts in which they enter this world,” “individual accomplishment represents a matter of environment as well as personal choice,” and “socioeconomic class relates to the establishment of institutional structures and procedures that maintain a concentration of wealth” (Lucey et al., 2015, p. x).

Inclusive Financial Literacy Education. Spotton Visano and Ek-Udofia (2017) argue that “deficit” assumptions underlying financial literacy education approaches are problematic because they risk “socialising economically marginalised groups into an acceptance of the very power structures that created their marginalisation in the first place” (p. 763). Apart from the current overemphasis on remedying individual deficits rather than collective decision-making and governance, Spotton Visano and Ek-Udo (2017) are also concerned that conventional approaches to financial literacy education “obscure the role of subjective judgement in defining the objects of study” (p. 764). The authors propose to challenge positivist notions of ‘authentic knowledge’ residing only with financial experts by foregrounding the socially constructed nature of finance—often understood to be factual, specialized knowledge (Spotton Visano & Ek-Udofia, 2017). For example, the credit score, in traditional financial literacy education, is treated as a “fact-based knowledge-object to define, to understand its use by creditors, and to know how one might go about checking the factual accuracy of one’s own payment record” (Spotton Visano & Ek-Udofia, 2017, p. 766). Overlooked in these lessons are issues of power and potentially discriminatory practices in the design and use of the credit score, including how it is calculated,

what judgement is used in the calculation, who has access to credit score information, and how that information is used (Spotton Visano & Ek-Udofia, 2017, p. 766).

Drawing from their community-based research, Spotton Visano and Ek-Udo (2017) propose that a more inclusive financial literacy education differentiates “between the fact-based knowledge and the subjective, socially constructed elements of the financial knowledge being communicated” (p. 767). In the student-led workshops designed and delivered to marginalized youth in their community, Spotton Visano and Ek-Udo (2017) aimed to increase familiarity with financial concepts and at the same time to advance a critical financial consciousness among students. For example, secondary school-aged students from youth shelters as well as students who had been out of school from some time participated in reviewing and assessing existing financial education materials, identifying potential topics of interest, and developing materials and delivery methods (Spotton Visano & Ek-Udofia, 2017). The goal was to design a programme that fosters an understanding of the ways in which financial knowledge is socially constructed while promoting youths’ sense of critical agency by positioning that very knowledge as dependent on and shaped by participants’ own active construction (Spotton Visano & Ek-Udofia, 2017).

Financial Literacy in the Context of Democracy. The approach that Davies (2015) proposes argues that alongside financial responsibility, citizens’ understanding of finances should extend to the domains of the financial sector and government. Motivating this view is the belief that “democratic processes and economic well-being require voters whose financial understanding creates functional rather than dysfunctional incentives for government” (Davies, 2015, p. 308). Underlying this motivation are several positions. First, as with mainstream financial literacy approaches, this view supposes that financial education should prepare youth

for adult life, which in Davies' view entails educating the median voter to have "sufficient understanding of financial processes and incentives to create a climate of pressure for politicians which makes it more likely that we govern in the public interest" (p. 312). Second, the role of citizens is to "work together in the development of democratic society, its institutions, norms and regulations, rather than always to act to preserve received practice, policy and power" (p. 308). Third, in contrast to mainstream financial literacy education that defines desirable behaviours such as budgeting and saving, Davies calls for a financial literacy education which equips young people with knowledge and skills for informed judgement and critical inquiry in the context of citizenship and democracy. Apart from knowledge about individual behaviour, students must learn about the financial industry and the role of government as well as short-term and long-term problems related to these such as financial regulation, welfare payments, and private provision for pensions (Davies, 2015). Davies argues that as part of sustaining and developing democratic processes, schools must be the institutions to embrace the task of educating students about financial education since relying on financial institutions to lead the way is detrimental from a democratic perspective.

Financial Literacy for the Radical Imagination. Haiven (2017) calls for a financial literacy based on the radical imagination, which he sees not as a normative category, but as "a constant force of disruption, questioning, and creativity working at the very core of the individual and of society" (p. 359). The radical imagination recognizes that the current economic arrangement is neither necessary nor inevitable and looks to Indigenous social, political, and economic systems past and present for inspiration while being wary of the colonial tendency to romanticize and appropriate. Haiven emphasizes that the radical imagination is *not* "a private possession located in the mind of the individual but as a collective process that emerges from

dialogue, debate, and peoples' often fraught and difficult solidarity in the face of social power relations" (p. 360). Five principles guide a financial literacy based on the radical imagination: 1) debt and financialization are not the result of individual choices but a product of structural and systemic forces; 2) financial power works with and perpetuates longstanding structures of oppression such as colonialism, imperialism, and race, among others 3) these power relations intersect, playing out at all levels of society and thus demand sustained and critical inquiry to unpack and challenge; 4) various fictions, narratives, and metaphors reproduce and normalize these systems, but equally these can be challenged with alternative fictions, narratives, and metaphors; 5) More than individual action, overcoming financialization requires collective resistance and solidarity and the reimagining of social institutions and relations.

One form of reimagining financial literacy based on the radical imagination is striving towards a decolonial financial literacy. Haiven argues that under the neoliberal mindset, Canada may be a wealthy country, but as a settler-colonial state, it is subject not only to financial bankruptcy but cultural and moral poverty. A decolonial financial literacy, for Haiven (2017), "might also concern itself with recognizing and acknowledging the debts that a settler society owes and a fundamental reconsideration of what repaying or offering restitution for those debts would mean" (p. 362). Specifically, it would require redistributing wealth, land, and resources to compensate Indigenous peoples and distribute them more equally among settlers (Haiven, 2017). A decolonial financial literacy would also require destroying allegedly wealth-producing assets such as large-scale mines that harm the environment and reimagining the idea of wealth itself (Haiven, 2017).

A Divide that Needs Bridging

While there is a burgeoning body of literature on critical approaches to financial literacy education from a theoretical standpoint, little of this scholarship is connected to the K-12 classroom context. Sober (2017), whose research captures the economics discourse in a U.S. high school economics and personal finance course, observes a similar gap between secondary economics education research that has focused on measuring students' grasp of neoclassical economics and the body of literature responding with theoretical critiques of such an approach. This research aims to remedy the deficits in the literature on financial literacy education by: 1) including teachers' perspectives on the current state and future of financial literacy education in relation to broader sociopolitical and economic issues; 2) connecting the theoretical scholarship on critical financial literacy education to empirical research from this study on teachers who are enacting what they consider to be critical versions of financial literacy education; and 3) highlighting the intellectual role of teachers in designing and rethinking current financial literacy curricula in place of the more common cursory focus on their instrumental capacity to deliver a prescribed program.

Criticality and Education

In this section, I examine ideas about criticality in the context of longstanding education debates about the purpose of schooling, the critical thinking and critical pedagogy schools of thought, as well as common sense ideology.

The Purpose of Schooling. The ability to think critically is universally seen as a desirable outcome of a good education, but what it means to teach students to think critically and the dispositions and skills that criticality requires are rarely advanced in the various academic articles, research reports, and curriculum documents I tend to encounter. The question of what

criticality involves in teaching and learning is also closely tied to longstanding educational debates about the relationship between schooling and society. On the right, educational theorists (e.g., Leming et al., 2003; Posner, 2005) believe schools ought to conserve the status quo by teaching students to succeed within its norms and thus conceptualize democratic citizenship as a spectator project in which citizens are passive observers (Ross, 2017; Stanley, 2010). Stanley (2010) refers to this view as education for transmission in which the purpose of education is to transmit the dominant social order and to prepare students to succeed within its norms and values. On the left are the reconstructionists, who believe that the aim of education is for social transformation, a view developed by George Counts in the 1930s and embodied more recently by critical pedagogues and proponents of counter-socialization (Stanley, 2010). An often misunderstood perspective is the Deweyan tradition, which has decidedly political implications but does not go as far as Counts in calling for indoctrination (Stanley, 2010). In this view, schools are seen as assisting in the task of social change by fostering a “method of intelligence” that equips students with intellectual and practical tools to address contemporary social problems but that does not lead them to a “specific social outcome” (Stanley, 2010, p. 20; Stuckart, 2018). Instead, the purpose of schooling is to cultivate in students democratic thought and action required to transform the social order towards a more just and equitable society (Ross, 2017; Stanley, 2010).

Neutrality and Indoctrination. In his book, *Rethinking Social Studies: Critical Pedagogy in Pursuit of Dangerous Citizenship*, E. Wayne Ross (2017) traces debates about the purpose of schooling back to the social reconstructionists of the 1930s. Leading progressive educators John Dewey and George Counts sought to reform the child-centred individualism of the Progressive Education movement in favour of a more collectivist mission to reconstruct the

social order, but they disagreed over the extent of the influence that schools should exercise over students (Ross, 2017). Both Dewey and Counts believed that schools tended towards the status quo and that American education, in its patriotic and capitalist leanings, was already a form of indoctrination (Ross, 2017; Westbrook, 2005). Their views on how teachers and schools should respond to this indoctrination, however, diverged. Counts (1932) believed that the indoctrination occurring in schools and society required a counter-indoctrination, otherwise individuals would continue to be subject to the injustice of the current forces of capitalism, industrialism, and individualism (Counts, 1932; Ross, 2017). For Counts, critics of indoctrination such as Dewey failed to see their own agenda of child-centred education aiming to cultivate democratically committed citizens as a type of imposition (Counts, 1932; Ross, 2017).

Counts (1932) understood that all education was a type of imposition and a natural outcome of the fact that “the whole of creation cannot be brought into the school,” so “some selection must be made of teachers, curricula, architecture, methods of teaching” (p. 19). He thus encouraged Progressive Education to “become less frightened than it is today at the bogies of *imposition* and *indoctrination*” (p. 9) in order to develop a “social theory of welfare” (p.7) and build a new, more just world order (Counts, 1932, p. 55). For Counts, imposition was not only “inevitable” but “desirable” and “the frank acceptance of this fact by the educator” was “a major professional obligation” (Counts, 1932, p. 55). Dewey, on the other hand, believed that if teachers cultivated critical thinking and democratic character in students, young people would eventually arrive at the same conclusions to improve society as the social reconstructionists but through their own intelligent inquiry (Dewey, 1937; Noddings, 2013; Stanley, 2010). Dewey thought that indoctrination led students to “seek correct solutions to difficult social problems” and failed to “sustain the energy and creativity required to address new and changing problems”

(Rogers, 2013, p. 214). That schools already indoctrinate was insufficient of a reason to continue indoctrinating, even in the direction of progressive ideals (Rogers, 2013). What was needed instead was the replacement of all indoctrination with an experimental approach to social change that required a curriculum foregrounding a structural analysis of present-day social problems and an attitude of careful examination and inquiry (Rogers, 2013).

Today, scholars continue the debates of the 1930s regarding the purpose of schooling and the meanings of neutrality and indoctrination. Ross (2017), for example, argues that in the present day, teachers and teacher educators pay little attention to Counts' arguments for radical counterindoctrination because "the bogies of imposition and indoctrination have deterred us from coming to grips with the ideological elements embedded in routine practices of teaching (and teacher education)" (p. 7). Other scholars similarly argue that the ideology of "neutrality has become common practice and common sense among teachers" (Heybach, 2014, p. 45), dominating current practices in social studies education, including at the elementary and secondary levels and within teacher education and educational research (see, for example, Agostinone-Wilson, 2005; Journell, 2016; Miller-Lane et al., 2006; Niemi & Niemi, 2007). As Warnock (1975) contends, indoctrination, in the narrow sense of deliberately inculcating in students one's own beliefs, hardly arises. Instead, the concept of indoctrination is commonly used by individuals critical of others' teaching (Warnock, 1975), or as Westheimer and Kahne (2003) suggest, the word is routinely used as "a political tool, and not as a conceptual or analytical one" (p. 4). For instance, those on the political right accuse curriculum materials concerning the protection of the environment or critiques of American foreign policy of indoctrination, while at the same time failing to see their own efforts to introduce education

legislation mandating from students the expression of patriotic duty as having a political agenda (Westheimer & Kahne, 2003, p. 4).

The politics of neutrality are evident in the Texas economics course, *Economics with Emphasis on the Free Enterprise System and Its Benefits* (The Texas Education Agency, 2010). A teacher intent on examining the drawbacks of the free enterprise system instead of only the benefits, as the title instructs, could be accused of imposing on students an anti-capitalist or anti-American agenda. Yet, the “lack of neutrality” or the “underlying, albeit more mainstream, ideology” as Westheimer and Kahne (2003, p. 4) put it—in this case, a capitalist “agenda”—is rendered invisible because it appears in the official curriculum and appeals to common sense. In other words, challenging the ideological majority that sees capitalism as beneficial and inevitable is seen as indoctrinating students, whereas endorsing the official version is seen as being neutral—despite this official version having its own, albeit obscured, political agenda of promoting the free enterprise system as the only viable economic arrangement.

The prominence of neutrality can also be attributed to policies that erode teacher autonomy and contribute to the deprofessionalization of teachers. In light of educational reforms that prioritize math, reading, and preparation for the labour force (which can be viewed as a form of indoctrination into a culture of neoliberal market logic) teachers have little authority or time to address contested political issues in the classroom (Noddings, 2013). More importantly, when we unquestioningly accept the ideology of neutrality, we challenge teachers’ professional capacity and judgement to make sound pedagogical decisions that have students’ best interests at heart, contributing to a growing public mistrust of the teaching profession (Goldstein, 2015; Journell, 2016).

Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy Traditions. Ideas about the extent to which teachers must remain neutral in the classroom are also interwoven with assumptions about how best to educate students to think critically. Two schools of thought predominate in the literature on criticality: critical thinking, which has its roots in the Western tradition of education as far back as ancient Greece, and critical pedagogy, which stems from Critical Theory and neo-Marxist philosophy (Burbules & Berk, 1999). As Burbules and Berk (1999) detail, both see becoming “critical” as a valuable educational goal, each teaching in their own way “do not let yourself be deceived” (p. 45). Both the traditions of critical thinking and critical pedagogy are concerned with progressively minded educators whose aim is to help students become critical in thought and action so that they can see the world for what it is and act accordingly, which ultimately can “increase freedom and enlarge the scope of human possibilities” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 46). Where the two schools of thought diverge is in their starting points. The critical thinking tradition equates being critical as being “more discerning in recognizing faulty arguments, hasty generalizations, assertions lacking evidence, truth claims based on unreliable authority, ambiguous or obscure concepts” and other criteria of “epistemic adequacy” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 46). The primary objective of critical thinking then is to “supplant sloppy or distorted thinking with thinking based upon reliable procedures of inquiry” using “the skills of formal and informal logic, conceptual analysis, and epistemology” as tools (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 46).

In democratic citizenship education, Sibbett (2016) contends, the aim of critical thinking is to develop thoughtful and reasonable individuals through pluralist approaches that view diversity “as a deliberative asset” (e.g., W. C. Parker, 2003), political autonomy that allows citizens to articulate their own conceptions of “the good life” and tolerate others’ competing

views (e.g., Gutmann, 1999), and the disposition of reasonableness (e.g., Burbules, 1995) that “seeks an outcome to which participants, after careful deliberation, are willing to consent” (p. 3). The critical thinking perspective in its pursuit of impartiality, however, obfuscates the ways in which neither deliberation nor the society in which deliberation occurs are neutral (Burbules & Berk, 1999; Sibbett, 2016). Spotton Visano (2019), too, argues that within economics education in particular, critical thinking “risks reinforcing the core neoliberal message of individualism” in that it “privileges individual rationality and risks ignoring, or at least devaluing, the situated and socially constructed nature of the knowledge students are learning” (p. 330).

“Critical Thinking’s claim,” write Burbules and Berk (1999), “is, at heart, to teach how to think critically, not how to think politically; for Critical Pedagogy, this is a false distinction” (p. 55). Critical pedagogy’s starting point then is to assess specific belief claims, but not solely on their quality in relation to truth as critical thinkers would have it. Instead, the aim is to understand these specific belief claims within larger “systems of belief and action that have aggregate effects within the power structures of society,” asking *who* benefits from these systems (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 47). While assessments of truth or “conceptual slipperiness” might arise within the critical pedagogy approach, the chief concern is with “social injustice and how to transform inequitable, undemocratic, or oppressive institutions and social relations” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 47). Critical pedagogy, for Burbules and Berk (1999), represents the reaction of progressive educators against the institutionalized functions of education that reinforce through the rhetoric of meritocracy, testing, tracking, and other strategies the belief that “citizens in a capitalist society need both to know their “rightful” place in the order of things and to be reconciled to that destiny” (p. 50). Critical pedagogues strive to “raise questions about inequalities of power, about the false myths of opportunity and merit for many students, and

about the way belief systems become internalized to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very aspiration to question or change their lot in life” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 50).

It is no coincidence then that scholars who are critical of mainstream financial literacy education turn to critical pedagogy as a potential framework for challenging its neoliberal tenets. Carr (2012), for example, argues that connecting financial literacy and political literacy through critical pedagogy can counteract unwavering allegiance to neoliberalism, capitalism, and the free market system as the only viable options. Political literacy, argues Carr (2012), should be included within the core concept of financial literacy since decisions at the macro level about spending on war, trade, and international relations will impact individuals’ access to healthcare, education, and so forth. Carr (2012) provides the example of the United States’ burgeoning military-industrial complex and suggests that critical pedagogy can problematize the normative concepts of democracy that unquestioningly absorb justifications for expenditure on militarization without considering their ethical, political, and humanistic implications.

Likewise, Tamir and Davison (2019) look to critical pedagogy of place (e.g., Gruenewald, 2003) and space (e.g., Morgan, 2014) to suggest that these frameworks can help students analyze how economic and political decisions effect their own lived spaces as well as those of others located both close and afar. In this way, students feel empowered to engage in dialogue and action in order to change the social order, a key concept in critical pedagogy (see, for example, McLaren, 2003) that is diametrically opposed to mainstream financial literacy education which merely aims to repair the deficits in students’ existing knowledge (Tamir & Davidson, 2019). For these reasons, previously described research by Spotton Visano and Ek-Udofia (2017) also looks to critical pedagogy to foster critical consciousness in youth by

integrating young people's own experiences outside the classroom and making connections to real-life scenarios. Drawing on Freire's (1970/1996) notion of reading not only the word but also the world, Arthur (2012c) argues that the choice is not between a financial illiteracy or financial literacy but between accommodating "ourselves to perpetual competition or being able to understand and alter an economic system that promotes alienation, insecurity and exploitation" (p. xiv).

Common Sense Ideology. Whereas the idea of common sense appears at the outset as an antidote to critical thinking, I would argue that within neoliberal discourses such as those that dominate financial literacy education, common sense is often employed as a kind of critical thinking. That critical elements to common sense may exist appears counterintuitive, especially when considering its characterization as initially proposed by Stuart Hall and Alan O'Shea (2013):

It is a form of 'everyday thinking' which offers us frameworks of meaning with which to make sense of the world. It is a form of popular, easily available knowledge which contains no complicated ideas, requires no sophisticated argument and does not depend on deep thought or wide reading. It works intuitively, without forethought or reflection. It is pragmatic and empirical, giving the illusion of arising directly from experience, reflecting only the realities of daily life and answering the needs of 'the common people' for practical guidance and advice. (p. 1)

A closer analysis of Hall and O'Shea's (2013) account, however, provides further insights that complicate the notion of common sense. Hall and O'Shea (2013) draw from the work of Italian political philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1972) to note that though common sense is socially conservative (leaning on tradition) it is also composite and contradictory in nature, containing

“Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history ... and intuitions of a future philosophy” (p. 324).

A notable example of the inherent contradictions in common sense is seen in the ideology of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Dubbed by Hall and O’Shea (2013) as “the mistress of common-sense language,” she “supported both the ‘free market’ (i.e. one without much state regulation) and a ‘strong state’” (p. 3). Thatcher used such contradictions to her advantage: as citizens we expect public services in exchange for paying taxes, but as taxpayers and consumers, we desire to pay fewer taxes as well as the freedom to make choices in an open market (Hall & O’Shea, 2013). Since we are all simultaneously citizens, consumers, taxpayers, and workers, certain types of logic will seek to persuade us to position ourselves one way over others (Hall & O’Shea, 2013). Hall and O’Shea (2013) employ this reasoning to explain the ascent and hegemony over the last forty years of what they call “neoliberal common sense,” suggesting that egalitarian and collective attitudes characteristic of the welfare state have given way to neoliberal ideas of competition and individualism that reduce society to a market and its citizens to consumers. In the context of financial literacy education, Laura Pinto (2013a) contends, common sense reasoning drives the over-simplified arguments that justify financial literacy education as a legitimate political response to the threat of economic insecurity. Pinto (2013a) argues that such arguments draw on unfounded causal links such as those tying economic problems to individual financial misbehaviour, misbehaviour to a lack of knowledge, and financial education to an increase of knowledge and fixed “misbehaviour.”

At the same time, common sense, Hall and O’Shea (2013) point out, also contains “critical or utopian elements” (p. 3), which Gramsci (1972) views as the “the healthy nucleus” (p. 328). As Hall and O’Shea (2013) illustrate, Gramsci here “is referring to the apparently

obvious taken-for granted understandings that express a sense of unfairness and injustice about ‘how the world works’” (p. 3). These critical elements of common sense may manifest in observations noting how “banks responsible for the ‘credit crunch’ expect to be bailed out by taxpayers rather than take the crunch themselves” or “how CEOs receive immense bonuses even when their companies perform badly” (Hall & O’Shea, 2013, p. 3). Such seemingly natural insights, figure Hall and O’Shea (2013), are what Gramsci calls “good sense,” concluding that common sense can exist alongside good sense.

To illustrate how the two, common sense and good sense, coexist, Hall and O’Shea (2013) turn to an analysis of online comments submitted to a popular British newspaper. Throughout their analysis, Hall and O’Shea depict how people engage with neoliberal frames and rework their common sense in response, sometimes resulting in entirely incoherent perspectives that combine irreconcilable ideas and elements of both good sense and neoliberal sense. The authors describe an example of an individual who, in a singular narrative, pairs good sense discourses that emphasize the importance of a living wage with neoliberal discourses that admonish benefit claimants for spending their payments on luxury items and living beyond their means (Hall & O’Shea, 2013). If common sense can be viewed as a site of political struggle, propose the authors, the resulting good sense can provide “a basis on which the left could develop a popular strategy for radical change” (Hall & O’Shea, 2013, p. 3).

Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals and Civic Agents

Teachers, suggest Aronowitz and Giroux (1987), ought to be viewed as transformative intellectuals who have a crucial role in the development of a democratic society. Viewing teachers as intellectuals is significant, the authors argue, because it provides “a theoretical basis for examining teacher work “as a form of intellectual labor” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1987, p. 57).

Furthermore, the conception of teachers as intellectuals or “reflective practitioners” underscores the idea that “all human activity involves some form of thinking” even when it is routinized, as teaching often is, and suggests that practice and theory are intricately connected (Giroux, 1988, p. 125). Viewing teacher work as a form of intellectual labour is significant because it helps to determine the ideological and material conditions that are necessary for teachers to carry out this work (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1987). For example, centering teachers as intellectuals suggests that they have control over their work and that further, the tasks of conceptualization, planning, and design of curricula are inseparable from the processes of implementation and execution (Giroux, 1988). As intellectuals, teachers have a role in shaping the conditions for teaching and learning by having a say in what they teach, how they teach it, and the broader objectives of their teaching (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1987). Aronowitz and Giroux (1987) in particular advocate for teachers to take on the role of transformative intellectuals who make “the pedagogical more political and the political more pedagogic” (p. 56). To make the pedagogical more political, the authors argue that teachers must help students understand their own position as social actors both within society as well as within schools, sites which represent struggles for meaning and power (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1987). In order to make the political more pedagogic, teachers who are transformative intellectuals also help students develop agency by equipping them with language of critique to connect problems in everyday life to classroom practice as well as language of possibility that allows students to become “agents of civic courage” to make “despair unconvincing and hope practical” in imagining alternative social practices for the future (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1987, p. 56).

Writing in the context of urban schooling and more recently, Mirra and Morrell (2011) push the framework of teachers as intellectual further and advocate for teacher as civic agent.

Similarly to Aronowitz and Giroux (1987), their framework aims to resist and disrupt the neoliberal education model that promotes a capitalist purpose for education and positions teachers as conduits, or “middlemen between content standards and children rather than professionals and intellectuals” (Mirra & Morrell, 2011, p. 409). However, in repositioning “teachers and students as powerful producers of knowledge” this definition calls for “highly qualified teachers as public intellectuals who help students connect what they learn in school to civic agency and empowerment outside of school” (Mirra & Morrell, 2011, p. 419). Mirra and Morrell’s (2011) reconceptualization thus expands the curriculum to include what they call the pedagogy of the city that fosters relationships between students and teachers, between teachers and communities, and between schools of education and communities. Central to this vision is the idea that teacher learning has to occur in spaces where teachers have opportunities to engage in meaningful activities, witness expert practice, where success is inevitable, and where the professional learning community allows collaboration across multiple constituencies, including teachers, students, parents, communities, and university-based educators (Mirra & Morrell, 2011).

Chapter Summary

I began this chapter with a brief history of neoliberalism followed by a discussion of its influence on education. I then discussed teacher professional autonomy under neoliberalism and how financial literacy education both epitomizes and perpetuates neoliberal thought. I argued that in emphasizing the role of teachers as technicians, current research on teachers who teach financial literacy education further highlights the neoliberal turn in education and educational research. Next, I focused on how neoliberal versions of financial literacy education have been challenged, beginning with a framework summarizing frameworks that critical scholars have

developed in response to mainstream financial literacy education. I argued that this study remedies a major deficit in the literature on critical approaches to financial literacy education having to do with the lack of empirical research with teachers. I then examined ideas about criticality by locating them within the traditions of critical thinking and critical pedagogy, also exploring the place of common sense thinking in these classifications. I ended with a discussion of scholarship that challenges the dominant ideology of teachers as technicians and positions them instead as transformative intellectuals and civic agents.

Chapter Four: A Case Study of Outlier Teachers

Imagination is often successfully invited by putting together hitherto isolated items, by finding unsuspected connections.

– C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*

Research Approach and Design

To design and carry out my research, I used the case study approach. Thomas (2016) explains that case studies are inquiries in which we think about *how* and *why* something may be the case and look at it from various directions, providing a three-dimensional perspective. As synthesized by Harrison et al. (2017), the three prominent methodologists of case study research (Robert Yin, Sharan Merriam, Robert Stake) agree that the fundamental goal is to “conduct an in-depth analysis of an issue, within its context with a view to understand the issue from the perspective of participants” (p. 8). In this regard, the project aimed to describe critical approaches to teaching financial literacy from the perspective of teachers and to understand how, why, and in what sense criticality emerges for participants who report teaching financial literacy in a non-conventional or critical way.

Specifically, I adopted Sharan Merriam’s (1988, 1998, 2009) approach to case study research in that the single most defining characteristic of my research was in “delimiting the object of study” as opposed to other approaches that characterize case study research in terms of the research process or the end-product of the investigation (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). For Merriam (1998), delimiting the object of study—the case—entails delineating a set of boundaries around the unit of analysis, which “can be an individual, a program, an institution, a group, an event, a

concept” (p. 44). For Merriam, who provides a broader understanding of what constitutes a case than do Yin and Stake, anything can be considered a case as long as researchers are able to specify the phenomenon in question and draw its boundaries (Yazan, 2015). In order to for case study research strategy to be seen as a qualitative research methodology in its own right, Merriam emphasizes its distinctive features (Yazan, 2015). For Merriam, case study research is: “Particularistic (it focuses on particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon); Descriptive (it yields a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study); Heuristic (it illuminates the reader’s understanding of phenomenon under study)” (Yazan, 2015, p. 139).

To develop what Merriam (1988) calls a bounded system, it is helpful to consider what constitutes and what does not constitute the case in question (Merriam, 1998). Understanding that the case study’s boundaries could be redefined in the course of the research, I initially bound the case to secondary school teachers in Ontario and Québec who had a critical sense of financial literacy education. In other words, I was not interested in the whole universe of teachers who teach financial literacy but rather a particular subset of teachers who have a critical sense, loosely defined at the outset, of financial literacy education. Within that subset, I was curious about its diversity—how context, personal biography and experience, for example, informed their ideas about financial literacy and played out in their practice. In this way, my study was particularistic in focusing on a particular phenomenon (the experiences and beliefs of teachers who take a critical approach to financial literacy education).

The aim of this study was to highlight atypical teachers through a case study of outlier teachers that shows something different from the norm (Thomas, 2016, p. 76). Based on previous research on teachers who teach financial literacy education and the well documented dominance of program initiatives favouring a traditional or conventional form of financial literacy education

described in Chapter Three, teachers with a more critical approach appear to be outliers. Their atypicality is what makes these teachers worth studying, and the lessons gleaned from them about future directions for financial literacy education made it an *instrumental, explanatory* case study. The study was instrumental and explanatory because it was used as a tool to “understand with a view to making things better” (Thomas, 2016, p. 98). Furthermore, this case study was *illustrative* in that its unusual feature may provide an instructive example (Thomas, 2016, p. 122). This research thus also satisfied Merriam’s conditions for being descriptive and heuristic (Yazan, 2015) in that it yielded a rich, thick description of the phenomenon at hand, illuminating readers’ understanding of the phenomenon under study. Finally, despite including teachers from both Ontario and Québec, this was a *single case study* as opposed to a cross-case or a multiple case study. I selected these two provinces anticipating that locating teachers who teach in a critical way could prove difficult, and I had found evidence in both provinces indicating that I could recruit more participants if I included both. While it is not the region that bound this case together but rather the uniqueness of the participants identified, the recent attempts at eradicating important social studies subjects in order to make room for financial literacy education in both provinces’ curricula (see Chapter Two) made for a compelling context.

To recruit a unique sample of participants, I identified a set of criteria for purposive selection. I sought secondary school teachers who understood or taught financial literacy in a way that deviated from mainstream interpretations of financial literacy as outlined in the conceptual framework (see Chapter Three). I thus constructed a working definition of critical teachers as those who think of financial literacy education as something more than individual navigation (budgeting, saving, and investing) of a fixed financial system. I then gave examples of what this teaching could look like in the recruitment poster, which I outline in the next section

on participant recruitment. The open nature of the working definition was intentional to ensure a sufficient number of participants. I appreciated that the nature of this study would make locating participants difficult given that, by their very definition, outliers are rare. As a result, I left my criteria open to avoid limiting recruitment in what was likely an already finite sample.

The second reason for keeping my criteria open was to welcome interpretations of criticality that were different from mine or from what I understood from the research presented in this study's literature review (Chapter Three). In fact, I hoped to uncover new ways of thinking about how financial literacy can be conceptualized and taught during the course of this study. If I had found an insufficient number of teachers who reported thinking or teaching about financial literacy in a critical manner, this would have been a significant finding in itself, and my study would have comprised a wider variety of teachers, including those who did not identify as teaching critically. In the end, however, all the participants recruited reported having a critical approach, though how they interpreted the idea of being critical, as Chapter Six details, varied widely.

Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment began at the end of May 2019 after receiving approval from The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa (Appendix A and Appendix B) and lasted about two months. I recruited participants using a purposive sampling strategy, the goal of which was to include participants whose involvement reflected the purpose of the study and from whom the most could be learned (Merriam, 2009). One type of purposive sampling in case study research is a unique sample, which is composed of participants who are of interest because they are atypical (Merriam, 2009). In the context of this project, teachers who approach financial literacy in more critical ways were considered atypical and

reflected one of the study's aims, which was to illuminate a broader spectrum of teacher beliefs and practices relative to financial literacy than is currently available in the literature.

I started the recruitment process by reaching out to potential nominators using personal and professional connections. For example, I contacted organizations such as subject and division associations in Ontario. I also reached out to professors and other scholars involved in critical work on financial literacy by email to ask if they could help identify potential nominators or participants. I asked nominators to identify any outstanding secondary school teachers who teach financial literacy in critical and interesting ways and who could be thoughtful and reflective in their participation (see Appendix C for recruitment scripts). I used social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to reach out to nominators and to potential participants directly. I attached the recruitment poster (Appendix D) to all emails and social media messages, asking nominators and others to share it with prospective participants and with their wider networks. The poster included my contact information as well as the selection criteria.

I specified on the recruitment poster that I was looking for secondary school teachers in Ontario and Québec who teach financial literacy in a critical way. I provided four examples of what taking a critical approach could entail:

- thinking of financial literacy education as something more than individual navigation (budgeting, saving, and investing) of a fixed financial system
- taking a social justice-oriented approach to teaching financial literacy
- teaching in the context of broader economic and sociopolitical issues
- teaching about topics such as the distribution of wealth in society or the ethical implications of consumerism

I also stated on the poster that the study would be conducted in English,² participation was both confidential and voluntary, and spots would be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. By taking part in the 1-hour interview, participants would receive a \$40 gift card of their choice³ and have the opportunity to contribute their opinions to the important debates taking place about financial literacy education today.

When interested participants contacted me, they usually stated that they taught financial literacy in the way that I had defined on the recruitment poster. As a result, I invited all the participants who contacted me for an interview. Again, because I was open to interpretations of a critical sense that were different from my own or from the examples I had listed on the poster as a guideline, I did not in any way filter out participants. I trusted that the interested participants had read the recruitment poster, understood the examples I had listed about teaching financial literacy critically, and were responding to the call because they believed they were teaching in a critical manner. I sought to include any teacher who saw themselves as having a critical sense because, in my view, this was key to understanding teachers' beliefs and practices. Some participants revealed information during our initial contact that made it clear they were critical in their teaching, such as mentioning specific examples of teaching for economic justice. Other participants were not sure whether they were eligible when they first contacted me. In these instances, I restated my recruitment criteria, noting that the examples on the poster are just a few of numerous ways to teach financial literacy critically. I explained that teachers define criticality in different ways and that one of the motives for this study was to understand this variety.

² While I did not explain this in the poster, I was able to conduct English interviews only because I am not fluent in French.

³ Originally, the honorarium was a \$40 gift card to Amazon. See the section "Ethical Considerations" at the end of this chapter for details.

The last recruitment strategy was snowball sampling, a method that involves locating key participants and asking them to refer other participants to the study (Merriam, 2009). At the end of each interview, I asked participants to pass on the recruitment poster with my contact information to other teachers they may know who teach financial literacy in a similar way. Initially, I aimed to recruit 20 participants in total, but seeing as the teachers in my study were outliers, I soon realized that locating 20 participants was unfeasible. Nevertheless, I kept the recruitment poster in circulation throughout the course of the first interviews with the 10 teachers. In the end, however, I found that similar themes were emerging in the last three interviews as in the first ones, and thus I had reached the point of redundancy, where “the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202). I had also acquired a sufficient number of participants to hold at least two deliberative inquiry focus groups.

Table 4, below, provides information about teachers’ participation in the types of data collection used in this study, which I describe in the next section.

Table 4*Data Collection Records*

	Teacher	Interview 1	Interview 2	Focus Group	Lesson	Resources
1	Andrew	x	x	x	x	x
2	Eric	x	x	x	x	x
3	Lucas	x	x	x	x	x
4	Miles	x	x	x	x	x
5	Vincent	x	x		x	x
6	Noah	x		x	x	x
7	Jackie	x		x	x	x
8	Maria	x		x	x	x
9	Oliver	x			x	x
10	Lily	x			x	x

Data Collection and Instruments

In line with case study research, I collected data using multiple instruments to obtain rich, thick descriptions (Merriam, 2009), gaining insights from different angles and from different kinds of information (Thomas, 2016). The main sources of data were individual interviews,

deliberative inquiry focus groups, and three types of documents. Table 5, below, summarizes the data collected from participants.

Table 5

Summary of Data Collected from Participants

	Interview 1	Focus Groups	Interview 2	Documents
Date	May–July 2019	September 2019	July–August 2020	Submitted throughout 2019–2020
Number of Participants	10	7	5	10
Length	40 minutes – 2 hours	1 hour and 30 minutes– 1 hour and 40 minutes	30 minutes – 1 hour and 40 minutes	n/a
Total Number of Hours or Pages of Text	15 hours and 10 minutes	3 hours and 5 minutes	6 hours and 20 minutes	25 hours of video content and over 6,000 pages of text

Individual Interviews

First Interviews. In May and June of 2019, I invited participants by email for an interview at a time of their convenience. After each participant informed me of their availability, I sent them the information letter and asked them to complete a consent form (Appendix E) ahead of the interview. I also included a link to the scheduled Zoom meeting and a copy of the interview guidelines (Appendix F), which listed examples of the kinds of themes and questions

that could arise in the interview. The interview guidelines listed general themes, including practices, experiences, and beliefs about teaching financial literacy and questions such as the ways in which participants' past professional and personal experiences have informed their teaching. I also included several specific questions, believing that giving participants time to prepare for certain aspects of the interview would enrich the data. For instance, I asked teachers to share with me by email a lesson that they would describe during the interview. I listed in the interview guidelines elements to consider such as the goals of the lesson, ties to curriculum expectations, and aspects that were a challenge or a success, among other examples. Since I was not conducting classroom observations, I sought for teachers to be as detailed as possible during the interview, and I hoped to achieve this by providing teachers with the opportunity to prepare in advance.

In the interview guidelines, I also indicated that I would be asking participants about what financial literacy means to them, the kinds of resources on which they draw, and the sources of inspiration for their teaching. I was specific about these particular questions because they are the kind that could prove difficult to answer on the spot. From previous experiences interviewing, I knew that responses to these types of questions would be more accurate if teachers had the chance to reflect on questions or compile, for instance, a list of materials in advance rather than recall the names of texts and authors in the moment. At the same time, wanting to maintain spontaneity, I refrained from disclosing all the content. For example, regarding the question about teachers sharing their own personal and political views with students, I believed it would be more authentic if the answers were not prepared ahead of time.

Except for one phone interview, I conducted the rest over Zoom, a videoconferencing application. Some teachers selected the videoconferencing option on Zoom, while others chose

to phone in either using Zoom or by phone. On Zoom, I only retained the audio portion of the recorded interview for transcription purposes and not the video, using my digital voice recorder as backup. I did not use a demographic survey to collect personal data, but I did ask for general information such as how long they had been teaching, which courses they generally teach, and the type of school in which they teach. Sensitive information such as socioeconomic status or racialization of the participant was only collected if the teacher identified during the interview as belonging to a particular group. The interviews averaged about one and a half hours in length, with the longest interview lasting over two hours and the shortest about 40 minutes.

To design and carry out the individual interviews, I drew from methods of both episodic interviewing and semi-structured interviewing. Episodic interviewing, according to Flick (2000), “should combine invitations to recount concrete events (that are relevant to the issue under study) with more general questions aiming at more general answers (such as definitions, argumentation and so on) of topical relevance” (p. 4). My interviews relied on the episodic method in that I asked participants to recount particular moments in time (for example, a lesson they taught, a significant moment in their young adult lives) and asked specific questions about, for example, participants’ theories about the popularity of financial literacy education or how they defined it. The interviews were also semi-structured (Merriam, 2009) in that while I had a set of questions and issues that I sought to address, I was flexible about the wording and the order of the questions. I also provided ample opportunity to explore issues further as they arose. As such, the interviews I conducted did not always align chronologically with the nine phases outlined by Flick (2000). However, I did draw from these techniques overall, which I lay out in Table 6, below.

Table 6*Phases of Episodic Interviewing with Examples from the Study*

Phase	Description	Examples from the Study
1	Preparing the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed an interview guide based on the researcher's experience and from the literature in the field
2	Introducing the interview principle (instruction of the interviewee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sent the participants a sample interview guide ahead of the interview to introduce the various topics of discussion
3	Asking the interviewee about the concept of the issue and their biography in relation to it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: <i>What does financial literacy mean to you?</i> Example: <i>What kind of lessons or stories about money have you heard throughout your life?</i>
4	Asking the interviewee about the meaning of the issue for their everyday life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: <i>I'll ask you now to think about a particular lesson you've done on financial literacy and walk me through it</i>
5	Asking the interviewee about the central parts of the issue under study (as defined by the actual research question of the study)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: <i>How critical do you think you are in your approach to financial literacy?</i> Example: <i>Can you think of a specific experience in your young adult life that had an impact on your current views and engagement with critical financial literacy?</i>
6	Asking the interviewee about general topics (more abstract relations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: <i>Who should be responsible for creating financial literacy resources and materials?</i> Example: <i>How would you describe an ideal financial literacy education curriculum?</i>
7	Evaluating the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: <i>Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not covered during this interview?</i>
8	Documenting (interviewer and interview information)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recorded information about each participant and each interview in a spreadsheet Wrote analytic memos
9	Analysing interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used thematic analysis Constructed profiles and vignettes

Similarly to Flick (2000) who addresses the importance of preparing participants for the interview in the second phase, Maxwell (2013) also writes about explaining the purpose of the study to participants, what the researcher will be asking participants to do, and what will be done with the data. Apart from distributing the interview guidelines described earlier and introducing the study at the start of each interview, I also offered participants the opportunity to ask questions throughout the interview. Often, at the end of the interview, teachers were curious about the story behind this research, and I was transparent both about how I came to be interested in the topic as well as what I hoped to achieve. After the interview, I followed up with a thank-you note and the gift card each participant had requested. (See Appendix G for a sample of interview questions).

Second Interviews. In June 2020, approximately one year after I began data collection, I reached out to participants for a follow-up interview. I contacted the 10 participants, all of whom had taken part in the first interviews and some of whom had also taken part in the focus groups the previous year. After obtaining permission to renew the project's certificate of ethics approval from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa (Appendix B), I proceeded with the interviews. The procedures of arranging and conducting the interview were similar to what I have outlined for the first round of interviews, but I updated the information letter and asked the participants to complete a new consent form (Appendix H). One difference was that unlike the first interviews and focus groups, I did not offer any compensation. The original consent forms from the first interviews noted that there was a possibility of a follow-up interview in the future, so the participants were not surprised to hear from me again. Five teachers participated in the interview, which focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and the financial crisis. The interviews averaged one and a half hours in length, with the longest interview lasting one hour and 40 minutes and the shortest one about 30 minutes. My rationale

for conducting these interviews was to check in with participants to see whether and how their teaching had changed since the last time we spoke in the summer and fall of 2019. I was also interested in teachers' perceptions of current events given the relevance of mass unemployment and the financial downturn to their teaching (see Appendix I for a sample of interview questions). Finally, it was an opportunity to ask for clarification on any issues that may have emerged during analysis of the first interviews and focus groups.

Deliberative Inquiry Focus Groups

In September 2019, during the second phase of the study, I invited all 10 teachers whom I had interviewed earlier in the summer to participate in focus groups, again offering a \$40 gift card of the participants' choice. To determine availability, I selected several dates and asked the teachers to complete a hidden Doodle poll, in which all the participants were kept anonymous from each other. While the information letter and consent forms pertaining to the first interview explained that participation in the first interview did not obligate participants to take part in a follow-up interview or in the focus group session, seven of the ten participants chose to participate. I hosted two focus groups; four participants participated in the first one, which lasted about one hour and 40 minutes, and three in the second, which lasted about one and a half hours. As with the individual interviews, the focus groups were conducted over Zoom. Again, in each case, I only retained the audio portion of the recorded interview for transcription purposes. As with the individual interviews, I sent out the information letter and asked participants to sign the consent form prior to the focus group (Appendix J). I indicated that while I would direct participants to keep other focus group members' identities and identifying characteristics confidential, I could not guarantee that each participant would do so.

During the focus group sessions, I drew from deliberative inquiry methods (Kanuka, 2010). A hybrid of research methods, a deliberative inquiry is similar to a regular focus group, involving “a unique kind of group interview, in that it gathers data from a number of people in a manner that is non-quantitative.” A deliberative inquiry is distinct from a focus group, however, in that it requires “participants to deliberate on issue(s) to explore where there is convergence of opinions” (Kanuka, 2010, p. 102). The deliberative inquiry is especially useful when a “greater depth and understanding about the problem under investigation” is needed and when “polarized views exist” (Kanuka, 2010, p. 102). In this case, the objective was to illuminate, through a structured and guided group deliberation session, a diverse set of views and experiences in relation to critical conceptions of financial literacy. Since teachers had expressed multiple interpretations of critical approaches to teaching in their individual interviews, one of the goals was to explore the differences in what teachers meant by criticality and bring forth distinctions in compelling ways. Another goal was to clarify some of the themes from the individual interviews such as what participants meant when they deemed the current curriculum ill-equipped to prepare students for reality. In this way, a deliberative inquiry allowed me to build on prior research and explore further data from the individual interviews that had revealed a diversity of opinions (Kanuka, 2010, p. 104).

An important assumption embedded in deliberative inquiry is the belief that “the opinions we hold can be formed and changed, and that they arise from discussions with others” (Kanuka, 2010, p. 102). Participants in a deliberate inquiry thus have the opportunity to “challenge ideas, reveal misconceptions and establish where mutual understandings exist” (Kanuka, 2010, p. 102). As such, the aim of this study’s deliberative inquiry group interview was to provide a space to establish mutual understandings of current interpretations of financial literacy education and to

come to a consensus around what an ideal financial literacy curriculum could look like.

Participants were asked, among other things, to generate a list of knowledge, skills, and topics that they thought should be included in critical interpretations of financial literacy education going forward.

Before beginning each focus group, I went over the consent form and other guidelines with the participants. For example, I informed the teachers that while I had some prompts prepared and would facilitate the discussion, the aim was for the participants to have a conversation with each other. I would be taking a back seat during the discussion. I also let the participants know that there were no “right” answers, as the objective was to forge a deeper understanding of the variety of teachers’ beliefs and practices. I also reminded participants that while it was important to maintain a professional and respectful environment, it was also perfectly healthy to disagree with each other and to hold divergent views. I then informed participants that the focus group drew on the methods of a deliberative inquiry and explained what this meant.

I began by informing the participants that one of the preliminary findings from the individual interviews was the multiple interpretations of criticality. The aim of the group interview was to provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on their own positions, challenge existing ideas, uncover misconceptions, and establish where mutual understandings intersect. I then asked the participants to introduce themselves to each other, naming what subjects they teach and how long they had been a teacher. As an icebreaker, we talked about an interesting film or television series participants would recommend to the group either related or unrelated to the topic at hand. I then led the deliberative inquiry, moderating the discussion by posing open-ended questions, ensuring a respectful environment, and encouraging participation

among all members so everyone had a chance to speak (Kanuka, 2010, p. 102). (See Appendix K for a sample of the deliberative inquiry focus group protocol). After the group interviews were completed, I followed up with a thank-you note and the gift card each participant had requested.

Documents

I used three types of documents as data sources to supplement the individual interviews and the focus groups: personal documents, popular culture documents, and public records (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Personal Documents: Lesson Plans. The nature of this case study was such that I was unable to conduct classroom observations for several reasons. One problem was locating a group of participants who could be considered outliers at the same school. Though conducting a case study with a group of participants at one or two sites is characteristic of traditional case study approaches, in this project it would have been difficult to achieve given that the type of teachers I was interested in studying are rare. The participants in my study would most likely be located in various schools, districts, and even geographical areas of each province. This geographical distribution would have made obtaining ethics approval difficult because I was unable to anticipate exactly where the participants would be located and because I would likely have to apply to as many as 10 (or more) different school boards to obtain approval.

Most importantly, however, it would have been challenging to conduct a series of classroom observations as a result of the particular participants who volunteered for the study as well as the nature of how financial literacy education is taught. For instance, two of the teachers I interviewed were on leave when I began the research. For teachers who were currently working, some were teaching financial literacy education (or some version of it) as a separate course while others simply introduced the topic when opportunity arose in other subjects (such as math or

marketing). Because financial literacy education was not always a stand-alone course for the teachers in this study, it would have been difficult to schedule an observation period in the same way one could be scheduled for a standard grade 10 English class, for instance.

For all these reasons, classroom observations were not well suited to this research project. I was also most interested in how teachers thought about financial literacy education and less so in the observable technicalities of their pedagogy. What did interest me about their pedagogy, however, was seeing how they reported on their teaching practice and how their beliefs and worldviews translated into practice. Since I was unable to conduct classroom observations, I asked teachers for a document of their classroom practice—a sample of a financial literacy lesson. I then asked teachers to walk me through that lesson during the individual interviews. Obtaining a sample lesson plan allowed me to gain at least some insight into what happens in their classroom, especially in cases where teachers went into great detail during the interview to contextualize their lesson. Examining a sample lesson also added another layer of analysis with which to compare the other documents as well as the interview and focus group transcripts. Not all teachers, however, submitted a strict lesson plan. For instance, one teacher provided their PowerPoint slides, while another one shared their entire course syllabus.

Academic and Popular Culture Documents: Resources and Sources of Inspiration.

As I interviewed teachers and later transcribed the interviews, I kept a spreadsheet tracking two types of resources: 1) materials that participants reported inspiring them to teach in a more critical way, although they may not necessarily use these materials in the classroom with students (see Table 14 in Chapter 7); and 2) teaching resources that participants reported using in their teaching (see Appendix L). The final list in Appendix L comprises 62 items which vary widely in format such as books, films, animation videos, reports, and online games. Resources that were

classified as teaching resources sometimes overlapped with sources of inspiration, but some stood apart. For example, the original texts of theorists like Foucault who some teachers reported influencing their worldviews, would have been too advanced to include directly in lessons for students. However, as the John Rawls activity indicates (see Chapter Five), in some cases teachers were able to transform theoretical ideas to age-appropriate activities.

The thematic analysis of the various resources that teachers reported using forms a significant part of this dissertation. While I was already familiar with many of the films, books, and teaching resources participants noted, some of which I had used myself when I worked in schools, others were entirely new. Because much time has passed since I had seen or read some of the films and books, I reviewed and watched every resource mentioned by the teachers regardless of whether I was already familiar with it (See Appendix L for a complete list of resources). This involved approximately 25 hours of video content and over 6,000 pages of text, not including the time spent notetaking, visiting websites, or exploring activities and online games, which I did not record as these activities less easily lend themselves to measure. While time-consuming, the experience allowed me to fully immerse myself in the study of the topic and to better understand how the teachers in the study think about pertinent issues. The compilation of resources (see Chapter Seven for analysis) further illustrates teachers' worldviews and their critical take on teaching financial literacy.

Public Records: Mass Media and Official Records. In the fall of 2018, prior to officially starting this research project, I set a daily Google alert for news items with the term “financial literacy.” The alert allowed me to make a habit of reading the latest news on financial literacy throughout all phases of the study, from the initial participant recruitment to the last stages of writing. Nonetheless, I did not include the stories arriving in my inbox every morning

as part of the formal analysis as this would have made the study unwieldy given the extensive amount of data examined in other parts of the project such as the resources section. Keeping track of daily news, however, ensured I stayed up to date with any developments in the field, informed the questions that I posed to participants in the interviews, and helped me think through ideas as I engaged in memo-writing and ongoing analysis. Furthermore, reading daily news about financial literacy education and other current events allowed me to contextualize the study, which resulted in the writing of Chapter Two on the social and political zeitgeist. This was especially important given that the case must be studied in its real life setting, and its contextual variables, such as political, economic, social, and cultural factors, contribute to a deeper understanding (Harrison et al., 2017).

Other public records I consulted included the online reports I described in Chapter Two, which resulted from Ontario's 2018 public consultation. I also reviewed the curriculum documents in both provinces pertaining to financial literacy education spanning the last 5 years. In the case of Québec, for example, the new financial literacy curriculum had replaced an older course, which I examined for comparison (see Chapter Two).

Data Analysis Methods

Analytical Memos

Merriam (1988) sees data collection and data analysis as a simultaneous, iterative process. To stimulate my thinking and develop my ideas as I went back and forth between preparing, collecting, and analyzing data, I wrote a series of memos in a notebook I designated for the dissertation research project notes. Memos, for Maxwell (1959), are a tool for thinking; they are a way of working on a problem or making sense of the topic or data. A memo can range

from “a brief marginal comment on an transcript” to “a full-fledged analytic essay” as a way to facilitate serious reflection, analysis, and theory development throughout the course of data collection and data analysis (Maxwell, 2013, p. 20). Writing memos was essential to this research project in that the act of writing was both an integral part of analysis and because it fostered new ideas and analytical thinking (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 118). Following the advice of Corbin and Strauss (2008), I treated the memos as “working and living documents” (p. 118) to keep track of my thoughts, afterthoughts, and tentative ideas, updating them as I identified concepts needing development and refinement. I often wrote memos immediately or shortly after interviews and transcription. I also wrote memos in between when ideas came to me about other parts of the project: the conceptual framework, analysis, implications, and so on. As such, the process of analysis was ongoing. Appendix M lists 24 analytical memos, but I also wrote shorter notes in between that are not part of this list.

To keep track of the memos and other information throughout the course of the research, I kept what C. Wright Mills (1959), in his writings on intellectual craftsmanship, calls a file. My file included a digital library on the reference management system, Zotero, and various Microsoft Word drafts. I also had a Numbers spreadsheet to track countless administrative tasks for the project as well as various information on my participants, research, and analysis. The most important document accompanying my file, however, was a research journal (a large 19 x 25 cm paper notebook) where I stored impressions, inklings, notes, lists, to-do items, and the analytical memos I describe above. I also kept a separate, larger notebook (21 x 29.7 cm) for all the notes I took on the various texts that comprise the list of teaching resources I analyzed. Finally, I recorded hundreds of voice memos on my phone to capture fleeting ideas when I did not have access to pen and paper. All the voice memos were eventually translated to writing and

compiled into my file. It was this series of research notebooks and virtual documents that helped me to keep track of my ideas as they materialized and to get unstuck when I was not making progress. “Imagination is often successfully invited by putting together hitherto isolated items, by finding unsuspected connections” wrote Mills in 1959 (p. 201). The file I kept allowed me to work out my ideas, make connections, and sketch out the contours of this dissertation, as I discovered, rediscovered, and connected ideas in seemingly disparate notes I made months apart.

Transcription

I transcribed all the interviews as it allowed me to familiarize myself with the data, and I often paused to take notes as I transcribed. At one point, I experimented with transcription software, but found it too onerous and returned to transcribing interviews myself. Though for analysis I worked with the full transcript that included details such as pauses and laughter as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2012), I omitted these details in the quoted data in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

Categorizing Strategies

Maxwell (2013) argues that basic to understanding qualitative data analysis is the distinction between categorizing strategies and connecting strategies. I used both strategies for data analysis, but I will first describe categorizing strategies, which are based on relationships of similarity. Similarity relations, according to Maxwell (2013), “involve resemblances or common features; their identification is based on comparison, which can be independent of time and place” (p. 106). As a result, categorizing strategies engage in the process of comparing and contrasting to find similarities and differences which are then used to “define categories and to group and compare data by category” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 106). Maxwell goes on to provide an

overview of the process, but given that I used Braun and Clarke's (2012) approach, I will focus on their approach to thematic analysis, which is a type of categorizing strategy.

Thematic Analysis. Categorizing data into themes is a common approach in qualitative research analysis, especially with interview data (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009) and document analysis (Bowen, 2009). Kanuka (2010) suggests that thematic analysis is also well-suited for guiding data analysis in a deliberative inquiry, the type of focus group interviews conducted in this study. I thus used thematic analysis to analyze the three types of data in the study: interviews, deliberative inquiry focus groups, and documents. In addition to its suitability with the kinds of data collected, thematic analysis aligns with the pragmatist assumptions underlying this project (see "Philosophical Assumptions" later in this chapter). Braun and Clarke (2012) suggest that thematic analysis offers a way of separating qualitative research from more theoretical debates about whether language mirrors reality or creates it with which scholars using discourse analysis need to be familiar. For this reason, thematic analysis renders qualitative research more accessible to a wider audience who may not be acquainted with the background of such theoretical perspectives. Given my interests in public scholarship and making this research available to the participants in this study, other educators, curriculum policymakers, and members of the public, I found thematic analysis to be a fitting method.

Braun and Clarke (2012) define thematic analysis as "a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) *across* a data set" that allows "the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences" (p. 57). Though the emphasis of this method is on identifying commonalities in the way a topic is talked or written about, the patterns identified have to be relevant to answering a particular research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Furthermore, researchers have to make a

series of choices about the form of thematic analysis they are using and justify their choices. The first is whether the analysis is inductive, driven by what is in the data, or deductive, driven by the concepts and ideas that the researcher brings to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). As Braun and Clarke (2012) note, it is possible for coding and analysis to use both approaches, though one tends to predominate.

In this study, the inductive approach predominated, meaning that the coding and themes derived from the data themselves. My rationale for this decision was to prevent an existing framework from pre-defining the results that emerged from my analysis as I was interested in developing a framework for critical financial literacy education from my research with teachers. As I explained in Chapter Three, ignoring entirely what I already knew from the literature about critical approaches to financial literacy education was, of course, impossible. However, opting out of using a ready-made framework allowed me to employ my own analytic insights to generate codes and construct themes organically from the data I collected. While I encountered Eakin and Gladstone's (2020) article on "value-adding" analysis in qualitative research only after I had completed data collection and analysis, their arguments for generative coding affirmed my initial decision. Eakin and Gladstone (2020) maintain that "code labels assigned to segments of data are often pre-packaged or ready-made concepts gleaned 'off the rack' from the literature or stock public understandings, and this can restrict what can be learned from them," precluding other possible interpretations (p. 8). Given the central aim of this inquiry to position teachers as intellectuals, I did not wish for a "top-down" approach to inform my presentation of teachers' beliefs and practices.

At the same time, as Braun and Clarke (2012) explain, coding and analysis often use a combination of inductive and deductive approaches, as "we always bring something to the data

when we analyze it” (p. 59). In the case of this study, I utilized a deductive approach when I drew from theoretical scholarship, for example, on neoliberalism to contextualize themes such as “The Neoliberal Imposition on Education” that arose organically because teachers referred to neoliberal thought and policies throughout the research. While this theme emerged from coding open-ended questions such as “What was this [teaching] experience like for you?” not every teacher used the word “neoliberal,” so it was my familiarity with this theory that guided me in interpreting answers discussing phenomena such as current cutbacks in education in light of neoliberalism.

I followed Braun and Clarke (2012)‘s six phases to conduct the thematic analysis. The first phase involved immersing myself in the data by jotting down notes immediately after the interviews and during transcription, listening to the audio recordings of the interviews several times, reading and rereading the transcripts, and writing up memos. In the second phase, I applied initial codes to the data that were relevant to the research questions. I used the qualitative data analysis software NVivo to code the transcripts. Next, I began phase three of the analysis, where I shifted from identifying codes to constructing categories and themes in NVivo. In contrast to codes that describe a segment of the data, themes reflect a patterned response or meaning in the data related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The fourth phase involved what Braun and Clarke (2012) call “quality checking,” when I reviewed the developing themes to check if they worked in relation to the coded data and the entire data set. In phase five, I defined and named my themes, summing up the essence of the themes in relation to each other and my overarching research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In phase six, I began the writing process, but this was not left to the end, as I began writing during analysis since writing was a way to conduct the analysis itself (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Table 7, below, illustrates the coding progression in a sample coding scheme, and Table 8 provides a sample thematic analysis as applied to passages in interview transcripts.

Table 7

Sample Coding Scheme

Research Question	Coding Progression		
	1. Initial codes	2. Category	3. Theme
What are the beliefs and practices of teachers who take a critical approach to financial literacy education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate power • Political influence • Distribution of wealth and power • Inequality’s effects on democracy • Fairness and responsibility • Distributive justice and redistribution • Taxation • Alternatives • Postcapitalism • Climate crisis • Climate literacy • Ecological sustainability • Structural analysis • Racial wealth disparities • Gender wealth disparities • Systems of oppression • Colonialism • Slavery • Uneven playing field 	<p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of wealth and power • Historical perspectives • Power relations and structures • Ecological sustainability • Alternative economic arrangements 	<p>Critical Economic Literacy: Knowledge, Skills, and Pedagogical Strategies</p>

Table 8*Sample Thematic Analysis*

Theme	Examples		
The Absence of Critical Economic Literacy	It's concerning to me that we have kids leaving the system without having heard the term capitalism in a class or unpacked it. Same with the dominant ideology right now of neoliberalism. When I ask them at the beginning of grade 12 if they have heard of the term, a few hands will go up. And if I ask them to explain what it is, no hands go up. [...] So, that's a shocking gap. (Andrew)	Why, in Canada, are Indigenous kids the poorest? Why is it like that? You know, there are reasons. What are those reasons? Why [is it] that the clothes that we buy are made in factories that are halfway around the globe? Why are these clothes cheaper than the clothes we buy in Canada that are made in Canada? Because that doesn't make sense. I think those issues should be in that curriculum. (Maria)	[...] The fact that this course in financial education at no point describes the economic system in which individuals are functioning is to me such an unbelievable failure for this course. That the word capitalism is not used anywhere is unfathomable to me. It's all about your individual choices and nothing about the system in which you are making those choices. (Vincent)
The Need for Community	I used to be more involved with Twitter and having conversations there. But so far, it has mostly been about mathematics education. And I think even within the curriculum of mathematics education, it is difficult to reach the areas that I would like to reach with what I can do. Finding people to want to talk about it has been difficult for me. (Noah)	For a lot of these lessons where I'm incorporating these ideas, I'm doing it on my own now. Some of them I'm taking from other people, of course, but none of them are coming from other teachers. Possibly just a community of teachers with similar values and similar goals in terms of what themes they want to include in their courses. Having the ability to work together probably would make things easier. (Eric)	I was saying that during lunch time, we all just sit around the table and discuss personal finance, [and] give a personal opinion. And there is such a perception [that] finances [are] political. So, with the teachers, we do have those discussions. I always present what we do in class, and they always ask me how we bring it up. (Lucas)

I also used thematic analysis while analyzing the various resources. Because they varied in their composition (length, type, etc.), thematic analysis was a fitting method to study a wide range of materials. I reviewed all these resources, noted their significance, and came up with a list of major topics they addressed, which I then grouped into themes using NVivo.

Connecting Strategies

As Maxwell (2013) explains, one drawback to using categorizing strategies such as thematic analysis is that it can create “analytic blinders” leading researchers to “ignore the actual relationship of things within a specific context” (p. 112). Thematic analysis, for instance, is not meant to identify meanings within a single data item (for example, one interview transcript) but across a data set (a group of interview transcripts) (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Since categorizing strategies fracture “the initial text into discrete segments” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 112), they also decontextualize the meaning of the data. Connecting strategies, in contrast, are intended to address these limitations by attempting to understand the relationships that connect statements and events holistically and within a context (Maxwell, 2013). Thus, connecting strategies can be applied to one data item in order to analyze the relationships within it, such as within an individual interview transcript. Connecting strategies furthermore rely on contiguity-based relations, which “involve juxtaposition in time and space, the influence of one thing on another, or relations among part of a text; their identification involves seeing actual *connections* between things, rather than similarities and differences” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 107).

Since I was interested in the relationships among the different data collected for each participant and not just the similarities and themes that surfaced *across* the data from all participants, thematic analysis was insufficient for this undertaking. For example, one of the research questions in this study asks how criticality emerges in teachers, signifying the

importance of context. Here, categorizing strategies would not work as I needed to grasp how this occurred for *each* participant, not across *all* participants. As such, for each participant I scrutinized the various parts of their interview transcript in relation to each other, what they reported about their conceptions of critical financial literacy, their approaches to teaching it, and their biographies and life experiences. I was also interested how the different types of data collected for each participant interacted with one other. I handled each participant's set of data as a coherent whole, examining the relationship within the data set among the different data collected: the interview transcripts, the focus group transcripts, the lesson plan provided, and the resources and sources of inspiration teachers specified.

Narrative Vignettes. One example of an approach to analysis that involves connecting strategies is the use of profiles and vignettes. I used Seidman's (2006) sequential process of crafting the profiles. I agree with Seidman (2006) that "a profile in the words of the participant is the research product [...] most consistent with the process of interviewing" allowing researchers to "present the participant in context, to clarify his or her intentions, and to convey a sense of process and time, all central components of qualitative analysis" (p. 119). There are other reasons for crafting profiles in qualitative research according to Seidman (2006). One is to transform what the interviewer has learned into a story, which is a powerful way for human beings to make sense of themselves and their social world. Something that was especially important to me in crafting the vignettes was to be able to, as Seidman (2006) puts it, "find and display coherence in the constitutive events of a participant's experience, to share the coherence the participant has expressed, and to link the individual's experience to the social and organizational context within which he or she operates" (p. 120). Finally, there is an aesthetic component of bringing a

participant alive that enriches and makes the work more rewarding for both researchers and readers.

When creating the vignettes, I followed Seidman's (2006) steps for creating participant profiles, beginning with reading the paper copies of transcripts from both interviews and focus groups as well as consulting supporting documents such as lesson plans. I worked first with paper copies of the transcripts because like Seidman (2006), I found that I was more responsive and attentive to the material copy than when working on a screen. I then marked and labeled passages of interest for the purpose of creating vignettes. Next, I moved on to the electronic copy of each transcript, cutting out the passages I had initially selected on paper and combining them into a single transcript. While this reduced the original length of the transcripts significantly, in the next phase, I read the reduced transcripts several times with a discerning eye to decide which passages were most compelling and began to craft the narratives. While Seidman (2006) recommends using the first person point of view to capture the voice of the participant throughout the profile, I felt more comfortable writing in third person while inserting certain phrases and passages verbatim (in quotations) from participants' transcripts. This also enabled me to clarify and provide context for ideas. This method allowed me to make clear that I am, in fact, constructing a narrative and analyzing it at the same time, even if I rely on direct quotations from the participant.

I followed similar steps in producing the vignettes for the other participants, although the texts are much shorter as I used the vignettes to highlight a specific idea or two. For the vignettes, I always relied on the third person point of view as they were much shorter and summarized major ideas from the interviews. However, I cited participants directly throughout the vignettes in order to stay faithful to their words and to guard against expropriating the

material for my own purposes. While crafting both the profile and the vignettes, I edited the transcript only to exclude hesitations and fillers such as “uh,” and “um” since conducting a close semantic analysis was not an objective of this research. I also took some liberties with inserting conjunctions or conjunctive adverbs where I thought it would help clarify meaning or ease transition between sentences and ideas. Sometimes I substituted words such as “they” with “students” for further clarification and to make the narratives easier to follow. The only times I explicitly changed wording was to protect the participant’s identity, but such revisions never altered the overall meaning of the participant’s speech. For example, if participants named the school or the city in which they teach, I replaced these words with “our community” or the like.

While Seidman (2006) recommends presenting material in a profile or vignette in the order in which it came in the interviews, this research did not lend itself to such an approach. In order to create the narratives, I had to pull from different transcripts and from different sections in each transcript as the interviews were conversational and messy, often jumping from one idea to the next, only to return to it again at a later point. When I transposed material from one context to another, however, I ensured that I was doing so to enrich the message and not to change or distort the meaning, asking myself if it was representative of the participant’s overall essence and experience at each step. While I stayed true to the characterization of the participants, in some instances I changed certain information to protect their identity. For example, sometimes I was vague about the details of their teaching position and left out any information that could have easily identified the participant.

Strategies for Validating Findings

For Maxwell (2013), validity refers to “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation or other sort of account” (p. 122). Furthermore, validity does not imply “the existence of any ‘objective truth’ to which an account can be compared” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 122). Seeking validity, instead, requires gaining “some grounds for distinguishing accounts that are credible from those that are not” rather than attaining an ultimate truth (Maxwell, 2013, p. 122). As such, the role of the qualitative researcher is to guard against validity threats, using strategies that test the validity of conclusions and the existence of potential threats that could lead to invalid conclusions (Maxwell, 2013). Two broad types of threats that Maxwell (2013) discusses are researcher bias, which entails arriving at conclusions based on “the selection of data that fit the researcher’s existing theory, goals, or preconceptions, and the selection of data that ‘stand out’ to the researcher,” as well as reactivity, which is the “influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied” (p. 124). Although it is impossible to guarantee validity, there are methods and procedures that can rule out validity threats and increase the credibility of a researcher’s conclusions (Maxwell, 2013). Below I describe the strategies suggested by Maxwell (2013) that were applicable to my research and led me to obtain evidence that helped to rule out various validity threats in my study.

Rich Data and Intensive, Long-Term Involvement

To provide a complete and revealing account of the data collected, the data has to be detailed and varied (Becker, 1970; Maxwell, 2013). This kind of “rich” data results from intensive interviews and long-term involvement in participant observation. While I was unable to conduct participant observations as previously described, I aimed to conduct several intensive interviews with each participant (two individual interviews and one focus group interview). Each

interview averaged about 1.5 hours in length and all three took place over the course of one year, meaning I was able to check in and confirm some of my observations with participants throughout. Though not all the teachers participated in each type of data collection, the majority participated in at least four out of the five data collection procedures. Transcribing the interviews verbatim allowed me to use the data in constructing vivid narratives in the vignettes that make up Chapter Six and add colour and texture to the themes described in Chapter Five. In all accounts, I provided concrete examples of teachers' beliefs and teaching practices, often citing participants verbatim, so that the conclusions I came to were clearly evidenced in the data.

Respondent Validation

Respondent validation, sometimes referred to as “member checks,” involves “systematically soliciting feedback about your data and conclusions from the people you are studying” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126). While I did not systematically member check with all the participants, I did check in with the teachers who participated in the second interviews (in the summer of 2020) about emerging findings to get a sense of whether I was interpreting the data from the first interviews and focus groups in a way that encapsulated their experiences.

Discrepant Evidence and Negative Cases

Validity testing also involves “identifying and analyzing discrepant data and negative cases” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 127). Given my own orientations towards a “transformative sense” of critical financial literacy education (see Chapter Six), I sought to ensure that I did not exclude data that did not fit what I considered to be “critical” teaching of financial literacy. I guarded against this bias by first inviting all teachers who had responded to my invitation. This way, I was not vetting participants based on whether I thought they were critical enough but allowed participants to identify on their own whether they saw themselves as critical in their approach to

financial literacy education. In turn, this strategy permitted me to examine a wider range of perspectives than had I elected a rigid set of criteria that would have excluded participants who may have self-identified as critical but who would have not met the criteria. Furthermore, while reporting the findings I sought to address discrepant data, evident in themes such as “Tensions Between Beliefs and Practices” (Chapter Five) and the section “Contradictions and Conflicts to Note” under “Critical Orientations” in Chapter Six.

Triangulation

Last, triangulation is “collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 128). Triangulating data reduces “the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method, and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 128). While I collected data using multiple sources, including in-depth individual interviews, deliberative inquiry, and document analysis, this on its own does not guard against validity threats in that “validity threats are made implausible by evidence, not methods” as Maxwell (Maxwell, 2013, p. 121) argues. For example, to triangulate data I compared lesson plans and resources against participant interviews to ensure that the kinds of topics and themes these addressed aligned with those that emerged from that data collected during interviews and deliberate inquiry focus groups.

Pragmatist Ontology and Epistemology

The proliferation of definitions and descriptions in the literature on case study research provides a challenge to understanding what exactly constitutes a case (Harrison et al., 2017; Luck et al., 2006; Yazan, 2015). Further adding to the confusion, case study research is

interchangeably referred to as both a “method” and a “methodology” (Harrison et al., 2017). It is therefore key that researchers identify the underpinning epistemology and philosophical orientation when using case study as a research approach. At the same time, one benefit of case studies is that they are able to accommodate a range of philosophical positions, allowing the design of the research to respond to the inherent complexity of the research problem (Harrison et al., 2017). For this study, qualitative research was especially fitting because, like Merriam (1998), my ontological position holds that “reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality” (p. 22). As such, my primary interest in this research was to discern the meanings ascribed to financial literacy education by teachers and how they construct them. The ways in which teachers make sense of financial literacy education represents different ways of thinking and being in the world, reminding us that such conceptions are not a neutral affair; they concern teachers’ own personal and professional biography, their ideology, and the school and political climate in which they teach. At the same time, the philosophical paradigm underpinning this project is pragmatism, which means that my research is not purely constructivist in nature. In what follows, I summarize the ways in which John Dewey’s pragmatist philosophy underlies the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this research.

John Dewey, as understood by Biesta (2009), believed that while modern science is a valid path to knowledge, it is not without critique. While he endorsed the scientific method, Dewey was not a pure positivist as he did not believe science to be the only way to gain access to what is real (Biesta, 2009). In fact, confounding that which is known with that which is real constituted for Dewey an “intellectual fallacy” and “one of the most fundamental mistakes of modern philosophy” (Biesta, 2009, p. 36). Though he saw value in the scientific method, he also

understood it to be “experimental” and “fallible” (Biesta, 2009, p. 37). For pragmatists like Dewey, there was no universal, immutable “truth,” and knowledge was inextricably linked to action (Biesta, 2009). Inquiry was a social, interactive and cyclical process, where “experiences create meaning by bringing beliefs and actions in contact with each other” (Morgan, 2014, p. 1046). This meant that Dewey did not support positivist claims that there is a single, absolute reality or that complete objectivity is possible, nor did he endorse purely constructivist understandings that the world entirely exists in our minds and that everything is subjective.

Dewey also sought to address the “crisis in culture” where modern science had been misconstrued as “an account of how reality really is,” thereby derogating “the world of everyday life to the level of mere subjective experience” (Biesta, 2009, p. 38). For Dewey (1909), the mind was not a “blank piece of paper, or a passive waxlike something on which objects impress themselves, and the accumulation of the records left behind constitutes knowledge” (p. 179). Yet, knowledge was also not “an immaterial entity, temporarily housed in a material organism, having thought or reason as its own independent or a priori power” (Dewey, 1909, p. 179). In other words, both mind and matter were interdependent. While Dewey rejected that knowledge is solely derived from individual experiences, he also refused to demote values, morals, and emotions in favour of “the hard facts of science” (Biesta, 2009, p. 38). Instead, Dewey saw the pragmatic method as one that attempted to reconcile two sides of this spectrum. Dewey (1910) was thus ahead of the times when at the beginning of the century, thinking about traditional philosophical problems, he urged us to abandon questions with the limited alternative they assumed, stating that “We do not solve them, we get over them” (p. 19).

Biesta (2009) reminds us that Dewey did not endorse the traditional hierarchy characterizing Western philosophy where theory (knowing) held a higher status than practice

(doing). Given Dewey's understanding of the world of modern science and the world of everyday experience as different but not irreconcilable, he understood that one or the other may be more useful or appropriate in any given context (Biesta, 2009, p. 42). Pragmatists, like feminists, writes Vorcino (2015), "begin and end with experience. This is because in an androcentric world much of what women experience remains unnamed and cannot be reduced to its articulated meanings" (p. 53). Thus, in placing experience as central to knowledge, pragmatists open spaces for voices that have traditionally been marginalized in a world operating under supposedly hard facts and rationalist thought. As Chapter Three outlined, teachers' voices have been largely ignored in the literature on financial literacy education, even within the domain of critical scholarship. This discovery, particularly in the context of the well documented devaluation of the teaching profession, led me to centre my research around the beliefs and experiences of practitioners.

Dewey argued that more important than accepting any one theory of truth was the commitment to critical inquiry and the problematizing of taken-for-granted assumptions (Vorcino, 2015). Pragmatism questions the seemingly inevitable and natural "constants" in order to challenge hegemonic frameworks and open up space for other theories that resist and offer an alternative to the dominant positivist conceptions of "our societies, our systems, and our social relationships" which "so often fail to take into account the experiences of the oppressed or non-dominant classes" (Vorcino, 2015, p. 53). In terms of educational research then, Deweyan pragmatism is relevant in that it seeks to address a particular problem rather than concern itself with universal truths and abstract philosophical systems (Biesta, 2009, p. 43). Morgan (2014) interprets Dewey's approach to inquiry as one where everyday life and research intersect, where "research is simply a form of inquiry that is performed more carefully and more self-consciously

than most other responses to problematic situations” (p. 1047). The centrality of quotidian experience and the ordinary makes pragmatism compatible with research that seeks to address “oppression, poverty, and other social injustices” (Vorcino, 2015. P. 54). Pragmatism thus sees research as just one form of inquiry, not necessarily superior to the kind of inquiry arising from ordinary life (Morgan, 2014). It is precisely this element that makes philosophical pragmatism useful in understanding social research (Morgan, 2014).

In this view, my approach in this study was pragmatic in the sense of making connections between educational practice and the broader social, economic, and political forces from which teaching and schools are not divorced. Since pragmatists believe in the power of ordinary people and practical transactions to transform the world and make a difference in living conditions (Glaude, 2007), it follows that teachers’ perspectives should be included in the important debates about the aims and merit of financial literacy education. For Dewey, teachers are not passive consumers of educational knowledge created by those who conduct the research, report on the results, and create policies and curricula based on their findings and analyses (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 111). Teachers themselves, in the act of interpretation and problem-solving, engage in an act of inquiry (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 111). My research takes these assertions seriously and seeks to study financial literacy education from the perspective of teachers in order to define the issues that matter to them and pursue them in ways which are meaningful to the participants (Morgan, 2014, p. 1050).

Furthermore, instead of turning to relativism or subjectivism, pragmatism sees intersubjectivity as the answer, where we interact and communicate with others to “construct an intersubjective world out of our individual, subjective worlds” (Biesta, 2010; Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 108). This shared world results in shared responsibility, and as a result, intelligence and

inquiry are not restricted to “the domain of means, techniques, and instruments” but also include “the domain of ends, purposes, and values” (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 108). Denzin (2010) likewise states that “inquiry has always been and will always be a moral, political, value-laden enterprise.” (p. 424). As such, pragmatism “requires an incessant focus on the consequences of interpretive activity for political ends, understanding that the consequences of inquiry are always already moral and political” (Denzin, 2012, p. 83). I thus undertook this research in the belief that the shift from research measuring youth and students’ financial knowledge and behaviour and teachers’ capacity to teach personal finance to research examining the politics of teaching financial literacy was significant. How we frame educational research has implications for not only the kind of society we *can* achieve, but the kind we *desire* to achieve (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 109). When we research the most effective methods to raise financial literacy in citizens or to create more ways to incorporate lessons on money management, budgeting, consuming, and investing, we inevitably promote a view of democracy in which economic decision-making is reduced to questions of individual action. As a result, we erase opportunities for what Sober (2017) calls “values discussions about the kind of society and economy” in which we prefer to live (p. 7). This project aimed to provide a space for teachers to have values discussions and voice their professional expertise and personal opinions about the state and the future of financial literacy education.

Ethical Considerations

Drawing from C. Wright Mills (1959), Maxwell (2013) reminds us that making a sharp distinction between research and the rest of our lives is harmful in at least two ways. First, this separation “obscures the actual motives, assumptions, and agendas that researchers have, and

leads them to ignore the influence of these on their research process and conclusions,” sometimes even leading researchers to hide these when they do not feel they are living up to the goal of scientific neutrality (p. 24). Second, the separation between research and the rest of our lives results in the loss of “a major source of insights, questions, and practical guidance” for researchers in conducting their work (Maxwell, 2013, p. 24). As a result, one of the first memos I wrote was titled “Researcher Identity Memo,” the purpose of which, as Maxwell (2013) recommends, was to examine my goals, assumptions, and values as they relate to the research and what resources and potential concerns my identity and experience could produce (p. 34). Instead of separating myself from the research, I opted to immerse myself in it to the fullest.

On the fusion of personal and intellectual life, Mills (1959) writes about surrounding oneself with “all the relevant environment—social and intellectual” to create the conditions for intellectual craftsmanship (p. 201). My professional, academic, and personal experiences illuminated different angles of the questions this research sought to explore. For example, throughout graduate school, I have committed myself to research and teaching that felt meaningful and advanced ideas for my dissertation. I stretched my thinking in various directions, from my work on economic inequality to my interests in politics and education. Outside of my academic life, I kindled inspiration from books, films, and podcasts bearing on this dissertation’s themes, and I engaged in countless hours of conversation with friends and colleagues. Though I was familiar with many of the resources that teachers reported using in the classroom or cited as sources of inspiration for their teaching, there were also books, films, and other materials that were new to me and which I was eager to discover for the first time. I also reflected on how my own life biography has impacted my views on this topic. Professionally, I have been a teacher in one way or another for most of my working life, so my desire to show the rich intellectual lives

of teachers was not unbiased. Yet, as was evident at the outset of this project, research is never neutral.

One obvious encounter with the political nature of research occurred early in the study, where I experienced an ethical dilemma concerning the \$40 gift card to Amazon.ca I had indicated the participants would receive for their participation. In the early stages of the research design, I had vacillated on the issue of including an honorarium, and when I finally made the decision to do so it was on the day of the deadline for the Research Ethics Board. While I was conflicted about using Amazon, I was rushing to make the deadline and decided to proceed with what seemed to be a standard practice in other research studies. The minute I submitted the application, I experienced a twinge of regret, and during the six weeks the application was under review, my conflicting sentiments about this decision would often resurface.

I did not feel comfortable associating the project with “Amazon” and having the name of this corporation appear on the recruitment poster and in the consent form of my study. The reputation of this corporation was in tension with the larger aims of the project, which were to spotlight the teaching of critical economic literacy. Such teaching often entails attention to issues of economic justice that do not align with Amazon’s labour practices and corporate culture. In recent years, the online retailer has attracted public criticism for its dehumanizing treatment of workers, lack of social responsibility, and aggressive tax evasion (Fair Tax Mark, 2019; McClelland, 2012; Silver-Greenberg & Kitroeff, 2018). I should have anticipated that the kind of participants I was recruiting (those who care about economic justice) would possibly have the same qualms that I did. It was no surprise, then, when one of my first participants asked if the honorarium could be donated to a charitable organization instead. This incident gave me the impetus to finally contact The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board at the

University of Ottawa and ask, as I had been previously contemplating, to change the honorarium from an Amazon gift card to a gift card of the participants' choice.

Though I regretted not acting on my instincts prior to submitting the application, it was a lesson about how easy it is to reproduce problematic practices in research. Deadlines and funding pressures make researchers susceptible to rash decisions in the name of expediency and convenience. However, this experience made me more sensitive to other potential ethical issues throughout the rest of the project, and I paid closer attention to ethical issues that arose at all stages of the project. For example, during data analysis I reported multiple perspectives and assigned pseudonyms to protect the participants' privacy and anonymity (Creswell, 2014). When reporting data, I articulated my own biases throughout the project and reported discrepant evidence as a way to guard against the validity threats described earlier (Maxwell, 2013).

Given the ethical implications of research decisions, it was important that my participants benefitted from the research. Besides the small token of appreciation in the form of a gift card, I sought to offer the participants something tangible that could help them pursue their work in the future. As a result, I later updated my ethics application to include obtaining permission from teachers to share their lesson plans with the other participants. I collected all the lesson plans into one file and upon completion of this dissertation, I will share it with eight of the ten teachers who agreed to participate, carefully removing any identifying information. I also created a list of resources that teachers had shared with me during interviews which I will distribute upon completion of this project. This list includes suggestions of resources that I was familiar with from my time as a teacher and from the research I had done on this topic that teachers had not named but that I thought would aid them in the teaching of critical economic literacy. Unlike the lesson plans, which were not included in the appendices of this dissertation for confidentiality

purposes and because not all participants gave permission for them to be distributed, the compilation of resources will be published in this dissertation and therefore available publicly.

Even though the participants in this study teach in different subject areas, the variety of lesson plans and resources may well spark new ideas and kindle inspiration. As I discuss in Chapter Five, one theme that arose in the interviews was a lack of access to a community of like-minded individuals doing work on critical economic literacy. Due to the confidential nature of the research project, I could not connect the teachers to one another. However, I hope that by providing them with a document of lesson plans and resources, they may feel encouraged to see others doing similar work and seek like-minded colleagues in the future knowing they exist. Last, I will also share a short report summarizing the findings in this study. The participants who expressed interest during the interviews will also receive a link to this dissertation once it is published and publicly available.

Chapter Summary

The research design and the methods used in this case study were the topic of this chapter. I began by discussing what makes the research a case study, how I delineated a set of boundaries to determine what constitutes the case in question, and the aims and nature of this case study of outlier teachers. Next, I summarized the recruitment process and the strategies I used to recruit participants, including purposive sampling and snowball sampling. I provided a table with information on the participants and their involvement in the various procedures by which data collection occurred. I then proceeded to describe in detail the multiple instruments I used to collect data, including individual interviews, deliberative inquiry focus groups, and three types of documents. I moved on to discuss data analysis, including the use of analytical memos

and transcription. I also outlined the categorizing and connecting strategies I used to analyze data, which involved thematic analysis and the creation of participant vignettes. Next, I discussed the strategies I used to validate findings. The chapter concluded by exploring the philosophical assumptions underlying this study and the various ethical considerations.

Chapter Five: Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

As teachers and as citizens we must be careful to recognize, celebrate and utilize the resourcefulness and resilience of people. Thus we must never lose the vision of education as a way for all teachers and learners alike: to think and to be thoughtful. In this light education has always been a subversive activity. I urge you to keep it this way!

– Ursula M. Franklin, *The Real World of Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education*

Drawing inspiration from the Canadian physicist and educator Ursula Franklin, this chapter explores the ways in which teachers think and are thoughtful and, as encouraged by Franklin, even subversive in their teaching. The chapter reports on data collected during individual interviews and deliberative inquiry focus groups to illuminate how teachers understand financial literacy education and how they translate their beliefs into practice. In particular, the data collected during the deliberative inquiry focus groups inform a significant portion of this chapter's findings given that a primary aim of the inquiry was for participants to deliberate about the meaning of critical teaching in relation to financial literacy education. Another objective of the deliberative inquiry was for each group to explore where opinions converged regarding the kinds of knowledge and skills that critical financial literacy education demands. In other words, participants deliberated about what would constitute the ideal curriculum when it comes to critical economic literacy. Since not all the teachers participated in the focus groups, I also draw from individual interviews during which I engaged participants with comparable questions. The results from discussions around the ideal curriculum are primarily captured in "Critical Economic Literacy: Knowledge, Skills and Pedagogical

Strategies” (Theme 2). Apart from this central theme, I present six others in this chapter (seven themes in total), all of which attend to the first and second research questions: *1) What are the beliefs and practices of teachers who take a critical approach to financial literacy education?* and *2) How and why does a critical sense of financial literacy education emerge in these teachers?*

As I explore in greater detail in Chapter Six, the participants in this study represent various socioeconomic and educational backgrounds and teach an array of subject areas ranging from math to business to various social studies subjects. Except for one participant who teaches at a private school, the rest of the teachers work in the public system. Even within the public system, however, teachers are located in various types of schools such as publicly funded alternative and Catholic schools. Despite the differences in participants’ personal and professional backgrounds and life experiences, several common themes emerged during data analysis concerning how teachers apprehend and enact criticality in relation to financial literacy, the way they view and respond to the political context within which they teach, and the ways in which they hope to see the aims of financial literacy reprioritized to more critical ends. Below, I chart the most prominent themes that surfaced, providing instructive examples from individual interviews and deliberative inquiry focus groups. In the final theme, “Tensions Between Beliefs and Practice” (Theme 7), I present data that was discrepant with the other themes, discussing some of the contradictions that arose during analysis.

In presenting the findings, I have sought to remain true to the language participants used as much as possible, often quoting teachers directly and at length. For the subthemes that discuss the knowledge, skills, and pedagogical strategies required of critical economic literacy learning and teaching (in Theme 2), I used *in vivo* coding. In other words, the names of the categories

were generated directly from the spoken words of the participants as recorded in the transcripts. For example, “Democratizing Inquiry” is labeled as such because these were the words used by one of the participants to describe a specific teaching strategy. In instances where participants did not use a particular phrasing, I assigned my own label. While it would have been useful to introduce the teacher vignettes here (which instead follow in the next chapter), I have chosen to focus on the themes first because the central contribution of this dissertation is the idea of critical economic literacy education. To understand to what extent, how, and why teachers teach the way they do, it is important to examine what a critical economic literacy education entails in the first place.

Themes and Subthemes

1. The Absence of Critical Economic Literacy

I begin by discussing the theme “The Absence of Critical Economic Literacy” because it establishes a foundation for the themes that follow. That teachers perceive a deficit in curricula and schooling introduces a host of issues undertaken in this chapter and the next one. For example, a dearth of critical approaches to financial literacy education in curricula is precisely what stirs teachers to introduce critical economic literacy into their own classrooms. Teachers wish to fill this void by having students grapple with topics that they believe to be missing in the official curriculum. In turn, teachers’ efforts to address curricular deficits lead to questions about how they explain the absence of critical economic literacy in the first place, how they attend to it, and what drives them to do so. I address these questions in subsequent themes and chapters, but I first describe how teachers frame the absence of critical economic literacy. This idea is articulated by several participants who list glaring oversights and flaws in the curricula and

courses that they are required to teach. Important to note here, as mentioned in the introduction, is that participants often use the terms “financial” and “economic” interchangeably. I begin with Andrew (all names are pseudonyms), who uses the expression “critical economic literacy gap.” I, however, refer to it as “the absence of critical economic literacy” because the use of “gap” evokes other ideas about opportunity and achievements gaps, for example, that are well-known in educational research.

Referring to traditional approaches to financial literacy education, Andrew admits that “we have to live in the world as constructed, and students have to make good decisions with their money.” In his view, however, “that seems to be where the conversation ends” because “there’s no critical component” in that kind of program. Andrew points out that financial literacy education was “an initiative of the previous government,” and while the Ontario Liberal Party “broadened that curriculum,” it was “all about financial literacy: how to save, how to invest, how to budget, how to operate within the system as constructed.” As Andrew sees it, “there was no conversation about the need for that historical and structural critique.” He illustrates how this “stark critical economic literacy gap” manifests in his classroom:

It’s concerning to me that we have kids leaving the system without having heard the term capitalism in a class or unpacked it. Same with the dominant ideology right now of neoliberalism. When I ask them at the beginning of grade 12 if they have heard of the term, a few hands will go up. And if I ask them to explain what it is, no hands go up. [...] So, that’s a shocking gap. [...]. And that’s more concerning to me, given the crises that we’re facing.

Other teachers disclose similar concerns. Speaking specifically about the new *Financial Education* course in Québec, Maria observes that the course neglects to address “financial inequities in Canada and in the world” and focuses entirely on an individual-level analysis:

One of the goals of the program is to develop critical thinking in managing finances and to bring students to develop self-confidence and knowledge for their own financial good. Both of the goals are very self centered, but I would argue that as an individual, you live within a society.

Maria lists some of the fundamental topics that go unmentioned in the *Financial Education* curriculum:

Why, in Canada, are Indigenous kids the poorest? Why is it like that? You know, there are reasons. What are those reasons? Why [is it] that the clothes that we buy are made in factories that are halfway around the globe? Why are these clothes cheaper than the clothes we buy in Canada that are made in Canada? Because that doesn't make sense. I think those issues should be in that curriculum.

Referring to the same *Financial Education* course as Maria, Vincent finds “the fact that this course in financial education at no point describes the economic system in which individuals are functioning” to be “an unbelievable failure.” Akin to Andrew’s complaints about the Ontario curriculum, it is simply “unfathomable” for Vincent “that the word capitalism is not used anywhere.” Instead, Québec’s *Financial Education* course is entirely about “your individual choices and nothing about the system in which you are making those choices.” Yet, as Vincent explains, “the choices that you have to make are limited by the system [...] in which you’re making them.” Moreover, “the political decisions that citizens make can determine what kind of economic system we’re all living in.” As a result, Vincent believes that “there needs to be more

connecting of the dots.” Vincent puts it poignantly when he asserts that financial literacy education is geared towards helping young people “survive austerity”:

To me, it looks like all of the materials were written by bankers. [...] There’s nothing about this program that is really providing students the critical thinking skills that they need to go forward. It’s this very individualistic perspective on financial education, which really seems aimed at helping young people survive austerity as opposed to helping young people prosper and maybe be part of building a prosperous society.

Oliver echoes these sentiments, emphasizing that the current curriculum is “out of touch.” The financial literacy education expectations in Ontario strike Oliver as “outdated;” in fact, he would be unsurprised if they were created back in “1998.” Oliver explains how the curriculum should be modernised:

[...] I was saying earlier how connected politics are to finances and to the economy and to economics. I think right now the major crisis that is going to be impacting our lives—teachers’ lives and our students’ lives—is going to be the climate crisis. And I think that financial literacy needs to be tied to an understanding of the sustainability of the natural resources and of the planet itself.

That ecological sustainability is a crucial topic but one that is absent raises questions about the kinds of knowledge and skills with which teachers believe a well-rounded and critical curriculum ought to equip students. The next theme addresses precisely these issues.

2. Critical Economic Literacy: Knowledge, Skills, and Pedagogical Strategies

If there is an absence of critical economic literacy in the curriculum, then how do teachers remedy this deficit? The response to this question proceeds in four categories: 1) the definition of critical economic literacy; 2) the knowledge it requires; 3) the skills it requires; and

4) the pedagogical strategies teachers employ to cultivate in students the appropriate knowledge and skills. While I have deconstructed the elements of critical economic literacy and grouped them into categories, it is important to note that these categories are fluid. For instance, under the first category, “Knowledge,” one of the subcategories is “Power Relations.” I have placed Oliver’s lesson on reparations under this subcategory to illustrate what teaching about power relations may look like in the classroom. Oliver’s lesson, however, could fall just as well under “Wealth Distribution” or “Historical Perspectives” since the way that wealth is distributed today has political and historical implications.

While some of the categories overlap, others work in concert with one another. For example, I have placed “Challenging Dominant Narratives” under “Pedagogical Strategies” and “Denaturalizing Assumptions” under “Skills,” but they are two sides of the same coin in that they pursue similar goals from different angles. I have thus pulled apart these complex processes to elucidate concrete and compelling examples of critical economic literacy education at work: both in the intellectually demanding learning that is required of critical economic literacy and the sophisticated pedagogical strategies teachers employ to engage students with it. In the same vein, the examples named in this chapter are not exhaustive of the possibilities for critical economic literacy teaching and learning; they are, however, limited to the ones stated by the participants throughout the course of this study.

Critical Economic Literacy Definition. I begin with how teachers conceive of financial literacy education. For several participants, the very definition is a departure from the traditional personal money management sense of financial literacy education. Because criticality is the guiding force behind their teaching, *financial literacy* for some teachers is one and the same with

critical economic literacy. Teachers, however, refer to the concept of critical economic literacy using varied language. Oliver, for example, speaks to the importance of a *political* literacy:

Financial literacy to me means awareness of how the economic system that we're all a part of impacts us, both on an individual level and a societal level. [...] Financial literacy should be situated within a discussion of politics and trying to lay out the Canadian political system to students. The issues of finances and financial literacy tie in so closely with political literacy.

Likewise, the definition Eric provides highlights the significance of understanding finances in a broader context, one that is both historically situated and future-oriented:

Students should be learning personal responsibility with their finances. I've got no problem with that. However, on top of that, there should also be an understanding of the context in which we're making these decisions as well as the history of how it got to where it is now. And probably projecting ahead as to what we're doing now and what that will mean for the future.

Zeroing in on the idea of resource distribution and economic fairness, Miles defines it the following way:

I look at it as literacy which helps you better understand how we use resources in our world, how we distribute resources in our world, and importantly, how the way in which we've set up that distribution advantages some groups over others. That's really my core concern with financial literacy education. It's better understanding how it is we've set up the world such that some are advantaged materially over others.

Andrew's definition reiterates the ideas introduced by the other teachers:

Financial literacy means, to me, having an understanding of the historical roots of the economic system that we have now. A critical understanding of the way in which an economic structure structures the society. And a literacy: a micro and macroeconomic literacy that enables students to make powerful arguments for the kind of world they want to live in with the understanding of the current economic structure and vernacular.

The next two subthemes clarify the ideas presented in teachers' definitions by delving into the distinct set of knowledge and skills that comprise economic literacy.

Critical Economic Literacy Knowledge. This subtheme reports on the knowledge base that critical economic literacy teaching and learning demands as expressed by the participants.

Table 9, below, provides a summary of the categories of knowledge.

Table 9*Critical Economic Literacy Knowledge*

Knowledge	Examples Cited by Participants
Distribution of wealth and power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts of fairness and responsibility within the capitalist system • The deleterious effects that wealth and power have on the democratic process (e.g., political influence) • Issues of distributive justice and redistribution (e.g., taxation)
Historical perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monetary history and the policies that created Canada's middle-class in the postwar period; implications for today's crises (e.g., economic crisis) • The role that public policies (e.g., progressive income tax, public health care and education) and collective actions (e.g., consciousness-raising, protesting) have historically played to remedy economic injustice
Power relations and structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various systems of oppression (e.g., slavery, colonialism) and their role in shaping individuals' financial lives and maintaining unjust economic orders (e.g., racial wealth gap)
Ecological sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The limits to economic growth and the increasing "debt" placed on the planet • The meaning of "good consumerism" as consuming less and reducing one's carbon footprint
Alternative economic arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The constructed nature of the current economic system • Post-capitalist analysis • Alternative ways of organizing the economy towards economically just ends

Distribution of wealth and power. The majority of teachers, at one point or another, discuss the importance of students gaining knowledge about the unequal distribution of wealth, power, land, resources, or opportunities in society. For example, Andrew's lesson, which specifically deals with wealth and power, is described in detail in the next chapter. The lesson examines wealth distribution in the context of the capitalist economic system, exploring the concepts of fairness and responsibility as well as the deleterious effects of wealth and power on the democratic process. Miles, too, teaches about the distribution of wealth but through the lens of taxation in a language arts class. He has students wrestle with "two different points of view on taxation" and asks them to "come up with arguments for the different points of view" and provide "supporting details for these from the texts" that the students have read.

The texts that Miles presents to students correspond to two thought experiments that ultimately reflect social contract theories represented by arguments about taxation from political philosophers Robert Nozick and John Rawls (though the two thinkers are not explicitly identified in the lesson). One of the thought experiments asks students to put themselves in the position of a musical band who, having recently struck it rich, is expected to pay much higher taxes now that their income has soared. Students are asked to reflect whether "the government" or "someone else" has "the right" to take some of the band's money after years of "hard work." The other thought experiment has students imagine whether they would prefer to live in a world guided by a "disembodied invisible hand" that "may or may not favour" them or, as a fellow Miles calls "Ron Jaws" proposes, in a world where they can "join with others to collectively influence income distribution" by taxing the wealthy "in order to give money and provide health care and education for those who are not favoured by the invisible hand." Those not favoured by the

invisible hand could include the students themselves since they do not know beforehand whether they will be rich or poor. Miles describes how students respond to the activity:

Students will gravitate to one or the other. Generally, they're much more Rawlsian but there's sometimes stuff that is funny. Generally, they don't like taxation; they just think tax is bad. But then they *do* think that people should have a fair chance and this sort of thing. So, there shouldn't be *no* taxation. They don't think *that's* the way to go.

One of the goals of the activity for Miles is related to how the tax system features in lessons of economic inequality. He explains the importance of scaffolding knowledge about taxation:

One of the reasons for increased inequality we look at is changes in taxation since 1970. So, this is a basic introduction to that because then we can talk about how progressive income tax works since at this age, they have no idea about the different types of taxes, like flat tax. They just know sales tax, right? And then when you tell them there's a progressive income tax and if you make more money, you get charged more, then they don't understand how tax brackets work.

The history of taxation and inequality that Miles includes in his teaching on wealth distribution highlights the importance of students becoming familiar with historical perspectives, which is the next category.

Historical Perspectives. Teachers stress that historical knowledge is a fundamental part of critical economic literacy. Historical perspectives provide students with an understanding of the ways in which political actions and collective struggles can have a profound effect on individuals' and families' quality of life and financial security. Vincent, who is passionate about the history of money in Canada, imparts the following example:

If you look at the history of Canada's middle class, it was created by creating money in a very different way by the Bank of Canada, printing it into existence and loaning it to the various levels of government interest free. And that's how we got out of the Great Depression. That's how we won the Second World War. And that's how we created Canada's middle-class and built most of Canada's infrastructure: with interest free loans from the Bank of Canada. And since the 1970s, we haven't been doing that. And since the 70s, we've had a debt crisis. To me, this is one of the most important economic issues that people need to be aware of.

Drawing connections between historical lessons and contemporary issues today, Vincent links the lesson on monetary history with the present coronavirus economic recession. A question Vincent posed to his students following the recent economic fallout was: "If we know as citizens that the government can invent money through a kind of alchemy, what does that mean for us now that we have all of these massive expenses?" Based on a CBC segment the class had listened to, Vincent first asked students to reflect on the question's implications "for the COVID crisis" and then extend it to "the ecological crisis," "reconciliation with Indigenous people," and "the Green New Deal." The purpose of the discussion was to prompt students to think: if the government is "printing money for this, they could also print money for those other things."

Miles touches on some of the same issues as Vincent in attending to the Keynesian economic policies that created prosperity in the postwar period. For Miles, "being able to see our world as historically created, advantaging some over others, and that it could be otherwise" is "a hallmark of critical financially literate thinking." He explains:

[...] We had greater equality in Canada for 30 glorious years, right after World War II. There were things that were done to make the country more livable for those that were

more disadvantaged. And there's been a rolling back of these initiatives. To see that things were done in the past to create things like progressive income tax, health care, more education. To see that we've had these successes would hopefully make people see that the world does not have to be like this. It was created like this. It was otherwise before. And we can create it anew, differently again. And to see that the way in which it was created before, it was through people consciousness-raising, people getting together, people protesting.

For Miles, bringing in historical perspectives informs students about the potential of progressive policies to create more just societies. Collective actions, too, hold powerful potential to remedy pressing social and economic problems of the day and lead to transformations in the name of equality.

Power Relations and Structures. Teachers also propose that critical economic literacy teaching ought to cultivate a deeper sense of the unequal power relations and unjust social structures that shape individuals' financial lives. Maria explains, citing settler-colonialism as an example:

I think including colonialism in talking about finance and economy is really important.

It's not something that happened overnight. Especially in a country like Canada where the oppression towards Indigenous people is still happening. There are still blatant inequalities. It's just kind of dishonest that it's not addressed in financial literacy.

Dominant narratives that only stress the story of progress are mistruths and incomplete in Oliver's view as well. Such narratives obscure the historical relationship between power and economics and the ways in which power continues to maintain unjust economic orders, especially for groups affected by systems of oppression. Oliver recounts an American history

lesson on reparations for slavery, in which he aims to disrupt the notion of progress and expose how unequal power relations continue to permeate American society. In his lesson, Oliver attempts to challenge the following ideas:

[...] That slavery was abolished in the Civil War and since 1864 there has been no slavery. There has been no guilt for the American Empire. That it has gotten rid of the one sin that it had been committing. And that since then, there's been progress, and everything has been fine. Trying to really, from an economic perspective, look at what slavery meant for America. And how the current affluence of America, the power that America wields globally, was built on free labour. And that never has been really compensated.

Part of Oliver's lesson involves "tallying up" the unfulfilled promise of compensation that would come to be known as "40 acres and a mule," which would have redistributed roughly 400,000 acres to newly freed Black families for their suffering and injustice under slavery. In his lesson, Oliver asks: "What would that mean with inflation today? What would that mean that the American government owes to Black people in the States?" He provides students with "different estimates of what that actually would look like, what that cost would actually be," all of which are "above the trillion-dollar mark." Oliver remarks that this kind of teaching is more valuable than traditional financial literacy notions of teaching how to "manage your personal bank account" and draws connections to the Canadian context:

That would be a couple of examples of how financial literacy does not just mean personal life management: how do you go out and make sure that your income is more than your expenses? But actually looking at your society, whether it's American, whether

it's Canadian, in terms of treaty rights, for example. And how much land is still unceded land that is being used in a productive way for settler society and not for First Nations.

One of Vincent's assignments in the wake of the 2020 Black Lives Matter Protests looks at similar themes. Vincent asked his students to watch a commentary by comedian Trevor Noah on YouTube, "Trevor Noah on George Floyd, Amy Cooper & Racism in Society" (Comedy Central UK, 2020). The assignment requires students to respond to questions such as: "What does Trevor Noah mean when he says, 'society is a contract'?" and "How has this contract been broken for Black people?" Students are asked to consider that "even if we do not agree with these actions, how does this concept of a broken contract help us understand the looting that has gone on?" The assignment goes on to clarify that "Black communities suffering extreme poverty have for decades been lectured by government leaders and media about the need to work harder and not rely on government hand-outs." Explaining that in the early 20th century two Black communities, one in the Greenwood district of Tulsa Arizona and the other in a Florida town called Rosewood, did just that and achieved through hard work "a modest degree of economic prosperity," Vincent has students research the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and the 1923 Rosewood Massacre and describe what happened. He then asks students to consider "How might these historical events contribute to the feelings of black people that the social contract has been broken?" This assignment aims to help students contextualize the existing racial wealth gap as well as provide nuance to the looting incidents portrayed by the media in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests by flipping the script to show how Black people have been and continue to be exploited.

Ultimately, for several of the participants, mainstream financial literacy education is missing a structural analysis in that it neglects to, as Miles puts it, look "critically" at "the

political structure and construction of our world.” Teaching students about the ways in which power and oppression shape people’s economic lives helps students understand the constraints of personal financial decision-making and the need to look at broader forces at work.

Ecological Sustainability. The need to include the looming threat of climate catastrophes and foster learning around ecological sustainability within the domain of financial literacy education is raised by several teachers. This theme also relates to the idea that there are limits to economic growth (see, also, “Denaturalizing Assumptions” later in this chapter under “Pedagogical Strategies”). Oliver, for example, perceives in schooling and society a “pervasive sense that growth is how economies function.” If traditional financial literacy education teaches students how not to “fall into the traps of unmanageable debt,” Oliver believes it also overlooks “the idea that we are creating a huge debt on the planet and on our natural resources that is getting pretty critical right now.” In the future, Oliver speculates, we will have “to figure out how to change the narrative of society.” He illustrates how the narrative needs to be reframed by contemplating what it means to be a “good consumer”:

Being a good consumer doesn’t just mean buying your products from places that don’t use sweatshops. Being a good consumer might mean not consuming and reducing your carbon footprint. And giving a little to charity doesn’t mean that you can then feel okay about taking a trip to Cancun. It’s going to mean not flying and not continuing to emit greenhouse gases.

While Oliver believes that these discussions are taking place in the public domain, he does not think they are yet “filtering down to curriculums” or as “pervasive” as they need to be. Worried about a lack of curricular attention to climate crises and the implications of this oversight for the future, Oliver suggests *climate* literacy ought to be connected to financial literacy:

I just picture the lessons in 10 years from now, or even the discussions that I'll have with my own children [...] and they're saying: "Well, what were you guys doing back then in 2019? Where was the pressure put on the powers that be, or on the government, on the politicians to make the direct connection between financial literacy to climate literacy or sustainability in general?"

Questions about political inaction in the face of imminent climate crises and the unsustainability of the current system lead teachers to include lessons on alternative economic arrangements, discussed in the next category.

Alternative Economic Arrangements. Teachers recognize that merely identifying problems is insufficient; students need to grapple with solutions and contemplate alternative models to structuring the economy. For Maria, this kind of teaching begins with exposing students to the idea that the economy is a construction, that it was created by people. She explains:

[...] Sometimes we talk about it as if it was some kind of natural phenomenon, but it's not. We've created the whole of it. And there are other ways of exchanging goods and it's worked. And some people work and live in communities where they do mostly exchanging. I live in a small town and we do a lot of exchanging with our farmer friends. [It's important] to show that there are alternatives, which is something that we never talk about.

The idea that the system is a construction, as suggested by Maria, further implies that it could be rearranged or built anew to meet more just economic ends. Akin to Maria, Andrew ensures that while his teaching includes critiques of the current economic order, students also have opportunities to engage in post-capitalist analysis and envision "what a future system might be":

“You thought about this all year, you have a sense of justice and injustices and goals for the future; how do we build an economic model that meets those goals?” It’s really a discourse on post-capitalism. Paul Mason’s book was really an inspiration for me, it’s called *PostCapitalism*. It’s not perfect. [...] But in terms of envisioning a possible way out and making the case that if our system is going to collapse from its own internal contradictions and climate pressures and inequality pressures, then we better start planning for it.

The opportunity to challenge the status quo and imagine alternatives to organizing the economy allows students to wrestle with contemporary issues such as environmental degradation and soaring economic inequality with the aim to prevent young people from feeling despair and too overwhelmed to act.

Critical Economic Literacy Skills. Along with a body of knowledge, critical economic literacy learning calls for a particular set of skills. This subtheme reports on the various skills named by participants in the course of the study. Table 10, below, provides a summary of the categories of skills.

Table 10

Critical Economic Literacy Skills

Skills	Examples Cited by Participants
Acquiring language and navigating arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring the major theories and logic of neoclassical economics • Developing a sense of the discipline and understanding the microeconomic and macroeconomic vernacular • Receiving, assessing, and negotiating information from the media and from experts
Examining multiple perspectives and taking a position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examining mainstream opinions about economic issues (e.g., labour unions) and understanding texts that both support and critique that perspective • Reflecting whether and how one's opinion has evolved • Taking a stance and providing supporting evidence
Challenging dominant narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examining taken-for-granted assumptions about how the world works and identifying their faulty logic. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The myth of the self-made billionaire • The myth of the American/Canadian dream • The notion of charity as a way to help society move forward
Taking action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making informed decisions about whether and how to participate safely in direct action and activism • Learning how to mobilize with others and how to make a case to the public • Developing an ethics of concern and an understanding that individual and collective action can effect change

Acquiring Language and Navigating Arguments. Part of “critical literacy” when “applied to economic justice,” for Andrew, is helping students “navigate the arguments that they’re hearing” from the media and from experts, “especially in the field of economics and business.” This involves learning how to “receive and negotiate and assess the information.”

Andrew explains:

We explore the major economic theories and trade logic and develop a sense of the discipline. But at the same time, as we look at that structural aspect, that history and the power relations of the way things work now, we also look at how economics is really about how we live and how we produce the goods and services that we need and want. And it doesn’t have to be the domain of the experts who often are working against the common interest.

Andrew covers microeconomic and macroeconomic theory under the framework of learning “the vernacular and the conceptual understanding [...] of conventional economic pedagogy and curriculum.” The rationale behind his teaching, however, is to equip students with the language that they need to understand this “dominant discourse” so that they can “negotiate it,” and “resist it,” and “engage with it.” Andrew acknowledges that in his class, students learn about personal finance topics such as “supply and demand curves,” “compound interest,” and “how to invest in stock markets.” However, he compares the learning of such topics to “gathering intel” so that students then have the skills to decide how they feel “about these structures” and so that they can “argue more powerfully” in the direction of their choice because they now “understand those dominant structures.” In other words, part of the reason for learning conventional economics and personal finance material is to subvert it.

Along with grasping relevant theories, concepts, and language, students also have to acquire the skills of examining multiple perspectives and taking a position, which leads to the next category.

Examining Multiple Perspectives and Taking a Position. When it comes to critical economic literacy, teachers express that examining multiple perspectives on contemporary economic issues and taking a position is a fundamental skill related to critical thinking. Vincent believes that the current course he teaches on financial education is pointless if “it’s not about teaching critical thinking skills.” While he has his “own opinions about a lot of this,” the aim is to expose students “to voices on either side of that issue.” His own politics may unquestionably sit “on the left,” but Vincent is not attempting to “indoctrinate” his students into his worldview. Rather, the goal for Vincent is to “model that critical thinking” by having students critically examine issues, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of various positions on an issue, and then arrive at their own conclusions. Vincent gives the following example in the context of a unit on labour unions:

One of my big challenges every year with this unit is to try to find three of the best articles that I can find that are against labour unions and critical of them as well as three of the best articles that I can find in favour of labour unions. And read them together with my students in class and have the critical discussion with them. And then let them write a little editorial about where they stand on these issues. And on whichever side of the issue they end up falling, I can always see in the work that they’ve done that they’ve really carefully considered both sides of the issue.

One of Vincent’s objectives in having students examine multiple perspectives on an issue is reflecting on questions such as: “Has your opinion changed or evolved? Were there things that

you didn't think about the first time you thought about this issue?" Throughout this particular lesson, Vincent may even share with students his own "frustrating experiences" with labour unions. At the same time, he also has students look at "what labour unions have achieved throughout history" and consider where we would be without these institutions. Vincent asks students to also consider the following: "Is there any countervailing power to the power of the boss in the absence of a labour union?" and "What kind of workplace are we in, in that scenario?" He recalls one student in particular from of family "heavily into right-wing politics," who, after examining the arguments for and against unions in Vincent's class, wrote a "pro-union essay."

Challenging Dominant Narratives. Another important skill in critical economic literacy is examining taken-for-granted assumptions about how the world works. For instance, when it comes to popular stories about self-sufficiency, entrepreneurship, and meritocracy, Eric uses the concept of negative externalities—the costs or harms incurred by the public from economic activity—to teach students how to detect the faulty logic in such myths. "What we need," argues Eric, "is an honest narrative of where we are and how we got to where we are now." He explains further, providing examples of billionaires Donald Trump, the current president of the United States, and Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of Amazon:

We tend to get pushed we got here with a free market, and those who got wealthy got wealthy because they had such great ideas and [were] so much smarter and so much more efficient and better at doing things than everyone else. [...] You have people like Trump who are going to say they're a self-made millionaire, which of course you should be critical of. Even people like Bezos, who is supposedly the richest man. [Amazon] was built on an infrastructure built by the public. Products are shipped all over the world

[using that infrastructure], [which runs] a huge environmental debt that everyone shares.

[It's important to consider] the externalities and the public influence that has helped those who are perceived as successful now get to where they are.

Interrogating stories about billionaire success, according to Eric, teaches students to challenge dominant ideas about the free market and meritocracy. Students then have the opportunity to reflect on whether individuals can be entirely personally responsible, self-sufficient, or self-made. Students can also examine the costs incurred by the public at large as a result of private wealth attainment.

Oliver takes a similar approach to teaching students how to challenge prevailing societal narratives often promulgated through conventional financial literacy education with a lesson on the “The American Dream.” He likes to begin the lesson with a quote from stand-up comic, social critic, and author George Carlin: “The reason they call it the American Dream is because you have to be asleep to believe it.” Oliver finds this quote fitting with “the idea that it is this myth that is sold to not just Americans but Canadians as well.” For Oliver, this dream is presented as “anybody who works hard enough and pulls themselves up by their bootstraps” and “through pluck, and courage, and hard work can rise from poverty to become a millionaire.” He explains how “the idea of the American dream” is “really just a myth”:

That idea basically ignores all the structural barriers like racism or systemic poverty that really do just privilege such a small amount of the population and make the American dream an impossibility for everybody else. [It keeps the majority] in line, keeps them working, keeps them going to their minimum-wage factory jobs every day, which again keeps the cycle of growth. And keeps the cycle of affluence for the small percentage of the population intact.

Oliver also confronts the following narratives about charity:

That charity is a way to help society move forward. That even the most affluent, even the people with the most amount of money, can absolve their guilt basically by being philanthropists and giving a lot of money to charity. And once you've done that, then you don't have to think about [...] your behavior or your ownership of certain things or your way of treating people around you ...

In his lesson, Oliver contrasts philosopher Paulo Freire's notion of "false generosity" with the notion of "true generosity," which, in Freire's (1970/1996) words, "consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity (p. 27)." "True generosity," for Freire (1970/1996), "lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world" (p. 27). Oliver's lesson aims to give students the skills to recognize the differences between false and true generosity and in so doing, build students' capacity to challenge other problematic societal narratives. The next category takes up the idea of taking actions beyond false generosity when pursuing economic justice.

Taking Action. After watching Greta Thunberg's speech to the UN in September 2019, Andrew's students expressed that they saw themselves "represented in a way they never had before." Since Andrew's students cannot yet vote, seeing "someone like this speaking of their concern so powerfully" was "really impactful to them." Andrew recalls that this was an "exciting" time for his students because Thunberg's speech took place leading up to the climate strike on September 20, 2019, and students who were planning to attend felt both "motivated" and "worried." To attend to their anxieties, Andrew and other teachers at his school offered "some in-service learning in preparation for that day and the week of action." The preparation

included “workshops offered by students, supported by staff, to have students come to an understanding of what’s going on and how to make their decisions about whether they participate or not.” The objective of the workshops was to “allow them to make an informed decision around their participation in activism.”

For Andrew, the need to organize these types of workshops speaks to “an organizing train-the-trainer gap and activism gap that exists in high school.” An integral component in critical economic literacy for Andrew then is “how do you organize and get active on what you care about?” While the direction “we need to head” may be “clear” for students, part of the skill involves “political economics.” By this Andrew means recognizing “the conflict” that is involved in making change and understanding “the mechanics of actually doing that in a political economic world” when “dealing with a lot of power and wealth.”

One manner in which Andrew addresses this “organizing challenge” and attempts to “close some serious gaps for students” in their education is by inviting into his classroom organizers from social movements as well as student unions at universities “who tend to be a little more relatable.” The purpose behind these visits is not “to pull students into whatever cause they have” but rather to “instruct” students “on how they mobilize, how they engage with people, with their own members, how they organize their own members, and how they make a case to the public.” The other component involves providing students with “resources for how to participate in direct action safely.” This need was especially visible during the Black Lives Matter protests in June 2020 when Andrew’s school had “students that were trying to figure out which protests were safe, who was organizing them, what would happen if they went down” because students lacked this information.

Other teachers also see teaching students about political action as a necessity. Lily, for instance, addresses the idea of “self-advocacy” in the context of the Ford government’s defunding of public education in Ontario. Lily reports that her students question whether contacting the Ford government, as she suggests they do, will “change the cuts to education.” Lily empathizes with her students’ reluctant position because she understands that they “think of it more in the singular way,” that students feel that they are unable to personally “effect change.” Nevertheless, she believes that as a teacher, it’s her “job to help them understand” that they are “a part of a bigger community.” Lily explains:

So, if you do it, I do it, everyone else in the class does it, everyone in the school, that’s already a couple of hundred people. [...] If we all send [Premier Ford] a text message saying we don’t like this, that’s a bunch of people letting him know: “We don’t like what you’re doing.” Imagine if you can expand that circle [...] to incorporate more people. That’s a pretty big message to him.

Miles also believes that a critical economic literacy should be “able to motivate you to take action with others to make change” and give students opportunities to do so. The driving force behind this action, for Miles, should be “an ethics of concern for those that are most disadvantaged by [...] our present system.”

Critical Economic Literacy Pedagogical Strategies. This subtheme lists the varied pedagogical strategies that teachers employ to engage students in acquiring the knowledge and skills required of critical approaches to financial literacy education discussed thus far. Table 11, below, provides a summary of the categories of pedagogical strategies.

Table 11*Critical Economic Literacy Pedagogical Strategies*

Strategy	Examples Cited by Participants
Identifying and unpacking concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging that the current economic system we live in is capitalism and that the dominant ideology governing it is neoliberalism • Unpacking concepts by always starting with the question, what does x mean? (e.g., “What does “education” mean?”)
Employing cognitive shifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having students conceptualize where they will end up in the working world as “workers” • Instilling awareness that all professions have a “worker” aspect
Denaturalizing assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing attention to the absurdity of taken-for-granted ideas such as infinite economic growth • Thinking critically about wage labour and the implications of increasing automation on the future of work
Posing “big” questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging students with broad questions regarding economic justice and wealth distribution, such as: <i>Why do some people have more resources than others? Why do we have unions? Why do we have minimum wage? What are taxes?</i>
Democratizing inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building trust and creating an environment for students that fosters agency and empowerment • Giving students the ability to shape the course agenda and to pursue their own interests
Making connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing students with context, language, and outlets where they can make sense of their own experiences in relation to larger socioeconomic and political issues • Engaging others in connecting the problems embedded in financial literacy education with other causes they may care about (e.g., anti-oppressive and antiracist education)

Identifying and unpacking concepts. As discussed in the theme “The Absence of Critical Economic Literacy” (Theme 1), teachers report that neither the capitalist economic system nor neoliberalism as the operative ideology of the last 40 years are named in the curriculum that they are expected to teach. As a result, identifying these major concepts and unpacking their meaning with students is an important teaching strategy when it comes to critical economic literacy.

Andrew discusses it here:

At the beginning of the year, one of my goals is to have capitalism articulated and contextualized for the students. For many of them, it’s the first time they’ve heard the term. It’s so integrated and implicit in the way that they live and the way their education has happened that they don’t have it teased out and reflected upon as part of their education.

One way that Andrew introduces the concept of capitalism to students is through a lesson on wealth distribution, in which students scramble for wealth and power.

As a result of his own educational experiences, Miles also emphasizes the importance of unspooling concepts with students in order for them to gain a critical understanding of the material they are learning. Something that has “really stuck” with Miles is the idea to continuously “unpack” the ideas and concepts with which he works, as a mentor of his once taught him to do. Miles explains how he translates his mentor’s advice into his own teaching by practicing the habit of examining what he means when he uses certain words and phrases:

So, I say something like: “It impacts our material practices.” What does that mean?

Material practices. Culture. What do I mean by culture? I try to do that in the classroom, too. Like, let’s really talk about that. Let’s slow down and talk about what it is. When

we're talking about education, when we're talking about financial literacy, what does it mean to be financially literate?

Showing what unpacking ideas and concepts may look like in practice, Eric provides a concrete example of teaching about externalities:

What is an externality? And I give the example of if I go buy a pack of cigarettes and smoke cigarettes at home, hey, I paid \$4 for the cigarettes. The seller got \$4. I got a product I'm happy with. So that's it. What isn't taken into account in that exchange is the fact that I'm going to get sick. I'm going to make other people sick. People are going to have to pay for my healthcare. The person who sold me the cigarettes doesn't have to deal with it. Everybody else has to pay for what I'm enjoying in this purchase that was just between me and somebody else.

Employing Cognitive Shifts. Another pedagogical strategy employed by teachers is having students engage in cognitive shifts. Andrew offers an example that involves students visualizing where they will be employed once they enter the world of work. In Andrew's experience, teenagers often imagine themselves rising to great heights and becoming, for example, professional sports stars, but the reality is that such outcomes are exceptions. Because some of Andrew's students come from relative privilege, he notes:

I think when you're a teenager, especially if you have relative privilege, you assume you're going to be on the boss side of the equation, and that the working injustices won't apply to you. And one of the things we do early on is highlight the math associated with the working world. Like, the odds are the students will be workers, and what does that mean for them? Even to just have them consider that for a moment can be really powerful for them.

Stretching their imaginations and taking cognitive leaps allows students to challenge conventional wisdom and enter the discussion about economic justice from a perspective where the values and outcomes at stake are in sharper focus.

Denaturalizing Assumptions. Another key aspect of teaching students to think critically about financial and economic issues is sharpening their skills in questioning prevailing norms. For Miles, this entails “denaturalizing certain assumptions” by which he means being able to “break down and talk about the assumptions that people have about how our world should operate.” One example is a discussion that Miles leads with his students on artificial intelligence and the future of work, in which he suggests that automation could potentially “be good if we reformed our political economy”:

... and we had a shorter work week and had a guaranteed income [...]. It'd be great if we had less jobs because we'd be creating more resources with the same amount of people so you could share them more equitably. And the students then can say: “Oh yeah this would be great. The robots can do the work and then we can have [more time to] play basketball. Or I can study this thing that I'm interested in.” Those students are thinking more critically, right? And then there are other students who are saying: “Well, then how are we going to get money?” Like then they won't have any money. Or then they'll be lazy, and they'll be like the WALL-E⁴ people, and they won't want to do anything. And they have a real difficult time critically looking at these sorts of assumptions. The idea that unless people are working for wage labour, then they would just sit and do nothing.

⁴ WALL-E refers to the 2008 Pixar animation film that depicts a dystopian society in which humans are overcome by advertising and consumption—drinking liquified food, watching television all day, never working, and never exercising.

For Eric, denaturalizing assumptions has to do with challenging conventional wisdom around ideas such as economic growth while providing their respective counternarratives that tend to get marginalized in the curriculum. To illustrate, Eric discusses Greta Thunberg's speech at the U.N. Climate Action Summit, which he showed to his class in the context of a discussion on resource extraction:

[...] What I really liked about Greta's speech is she brought attention to the absolute absurdity of living in [...] an economic system that will grow infinitely and that we're not ever going to hit limits. And it's a viewpoint that gets marginalized and isn't really part of the discussion ever. However, I really liked the fact that she brought it up, and I like the fact that it's now entering the discussion that we need to think about.

Here, Eric is interested in teaching students to counter what he calls "almost the cult-like fanaticism around economic growth that we seem to have" in order to get to the truth, which is "that finite resources will run out." The objective of the lesson is "to get students to question whether economic growth is really the be-all and end-all of what we should be aiming for."

Posing "Big" Questions. Miles points out in one of his interviews that traditional financial literacy education programs tend to be "wildly unsuccessful" in that they not only fail to improve people's financial security, but they also tend to impart knowledge that is largely irrelevant and unhelpful. Drawing from his years of teaching, Miles reflects that in his experience, children and youth are generally not interested in the details of mortgages, life insurance, or credit cards that form the core curriculum of most personal finance programs. Instead, Miles finds that students tend to be more interested in the "big issues." The following are a sample of the kinds of questions to which he is referring:

How should we distribute the resources in our society? Why is it that this group has a lot of resources, and this group has a little bit of resources? These kinds of questions. Why do we have unions? Why do we have minimum wage? What are taxes? Why is the government taking money from me and then giving it to other people?

With the students Miles has taught in the past, questions about wealth distribution and economic justice are ones that students “can get into,” especially if “presented in a manner that they’re able to access.” One way to get students to access these questions is by looking at specific social issues such as automation, described by Miles earlier, or teaching about the working class and the struggles for wages with a picture book like *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type*.⁵ In short, posing broad questions about how we ought to live together can compel students to engage in thinking critically about how economics structures their world.

Democratizing Inquiry. Teachers also suggest that for critical economic literacy to flourish, students require safe and transformative spaces to learn. One way in which teachers build rapport with students is through a strategy that Andrew calls “democratizing inquiry.” By democratizing inquiry Andrew means giving students a sense of: “Let’s investigate this together, and you figure out how you feel about it.” He elaborates:

We’re going to do it collectively. There’s going to be a sequence that students understand. There’s going to be empowerment and agency on their end to shape the way we do that inquiry. There’s going to be space for different perspectives and their own understandings to emerge through that inquiry. And I’m going to rely in the trust that I’ve built with them over the course of that process to have them buy into what we are doing.

⁵ *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type* is a children’s book written by Doreen Cronin about Farmer Brown and his cows. The cows find an old typewriter and write a series of letters to the farmer, demanding, for example, heated blankets to keep them warm at night. They eventually go on strike by withholding their milk when Farmer Brown refuses their requests. Other animals at the farm follow suit.

It is important for Andrew that students have “opportunities to shape their course agenda.” “As a way of flattening that hierarchy,” Andrew gives “students a lot of agency in some of the ways in which that map gets adjusted year-over-year.” An example of giving students agency for Andrew is including “a few lessons on Bitcoin” that he hadn’t planned on and had to learn about himself. Andrew adjusted the curriculum to include Bitcoin because “the kids were really interested in crypto currency and some of them were data mining for the stuff.”

One particularly distinct assignment that showcases the strategy of democratizing inquiry is one that Eric describes. In his accounting course, Eric’s class was learning about accounting ethics, and one of the topics that a student wanted to pursue was tax evasion. Together, Eric and the student devised a plan for a project from the perspective of a “wealthy class person that doesn’t want to pay taxes” and how this affluent individual may “get away with it.” The purpose of the project was to take “a point of view that maybe isn’t their own and maybe reflects some of the problems that we have in society.” Eric illustrates further:

The student put together a really good tutorial on how to *not* pay tax, where to send your money, how to get your money into banks in the Cayman Islands. I found it really fascinating that the student could get into that mindset. And then, of course, there’s that extension. Is it right that it’s this easy for everyone to do? And we can follow that up with the discussion.

Pursuing an assignment that departs from conventional approaches to teaching about accounting ethics but one that took the students’ interests into account resulted in a creative end product. Through producing an informative webinar, the student was able to learn about economic injustice as reflected by the loopholes in the economic system that permit corporations and wealthy individuals to evade taxes.

Making Connections. Part of critical economic literacy teaching involves providing students with a context and a language where they can make sense of their own experiences in relation to larger socioeconomic and political issues. Eric gives the example of watching a documentary with his class that dealt with environmental themes, which were particularly relevant to his students' lives.⁶ Eric describes the experiences of asking students to complete a reflection on the documentary:

How does that connect? Just connect that to anything we've learned in the course; show me that you've [...] thought about it. And honestly, a lot of them gave some really, really personal, some really insightful reflections as to [...] the problems that it's caused for them or somebody in their family. [...] I find that the students, they understand these issues. Often, it's just a case of not having a proper outlet to express them...

Likewise, for Noah, "the local context is important" because then students are invested in their learning. He generally finds that textbooks and resources he comes across use "a made-up situation that isn't connected to [...] circumstances" to which students "could relate." For example, the resource "could be from Los Angeles," or "another country," or "just be made up on a distant land that doesn't even exist." As a result, Noah addresses this shortcoming by engaging students in lessons where "the context provides them with something more to grab onto." One example is having students look at a "heat map" of their neighbourhoods and asking: "Why do you think that this neighborhood has a lot more payday loans than the other one?" Since the context is local, the lesson is more "authentic," students are "more invested," and they have the opportunity to "offer their lived experiences with money or with loans."

⁶ I refrain from providing more details here in order to protect the anonymity of the community in which the participant taught at the time.

Some teachers, however, do not limit their critical economic literacy teaching to students. Miles, for instance, finds it important to educate others about the problematic assumptions of financial literacy education outside of his classroom. One way he does so is by engaging colleagues in connecting the problems embedded in financial literacy education to other causes that they may care about. The example that Miles provides below also illustrates the strategy of employing cognitive shifts described earlier, though here I highlight the strategy of making connections to anti-oppressive and antiracist education. Miles describes a conversation he had with colleagues when the new financial literacy curriculum was released in Ontario, which coincided with the Black Lives Matter protests in June of 2020:

I said something like: “Why would someone think financial literacy is racist? And why would someone think that it’s *not* racist?” [...] And then people would just start defending financial literacy. And I’m like: “No, no, no. I framed it in this way, so you don’t have to [defend it]. Just take on this other persona. [...]. Like, why would someone say financial literacy is racist? Why? What could possess them to think that it’s white supremacist?”

Miles then describes how some of his colleagues responded:

Some [colleagues] were still like: “Okay, but financial literacy works for some people, so let’s just teach it for them. And then for the other people, we can still talk about racism.” But then other [colleagues] jump on and they’re like: “No, no, you’re missing the point. There’s a problem with the reason why you’re justifying financial literacy. You think it’s going to work, and it’s individualizing poverty [...]. And you’re essentially saying that the reason why there’s this wealth disparity is because Black people don’t know how to budget [...], which is completely untrue.”

Miles found that there was “a lot of take-up” in the conversation because many of his colleagues had attended workshops on anti-oppressive education in the past, and as a result, they were more familiar and receptive to the ideas he presented. When Miles thus linked the problems with financial literacy to “racialized injustice,” he found that “there’s just more people who understand it more. They’re more on board. They see it as a valuable initiative. And that they’ll try and do the work to understand what’s going on.” Many people who are not familiar with anti-oppressive philosophies, conversely, often regard traditional financial literacy education as empowering and are reluctant to see it as problematic, the topic of the next theme.

3. The Appeal of Financial Literacy Education

While teachers advocate for critical financial literacy education, they appreciate that conventional personal finance education, which they see as inadequate and disempowering, holds sway in the public eye. Teachers’ perspectives on the appeal of dominant understandings of financial literacy are variations on the same theme. They primarily attribute the prevalence and popularity of financial literacy education to deeply engrained societal narratives about rugged individualism and meritocracy within the capitalist system. Oliver, for example, discusses the power of personal finance narratives in the context of prevailing societal messages that communicate the salience of “individual life choices.” At the same time, Oliver observes that narratives around “communalism” tend to go unmentioned, leaving individuals without a “sense that people in numbers can change things.” Students are left unaware “that societies need to construct the elements of the system in a way that protects marginalized people or people who are facing barriers or people who are at the bottom of the social economic hierarchy.” In his own teaching, Oliver struggles in finding ways to make palpable and relatable “the communal efforts, the communalism that was important in, say, the 1930s in Canada as people were really suffering

economically.” He finds teaching about communal efforts difficult in the current context where students are immersed in a climate that “really promotes individualism, and promotes looking out for number one, and competition.”

For Vincent, easily accepted accounts about young people’s financial illiteracy are tied to a broader narrative that has been pushed by mainstream media about youth. Vincent describes the narrative as constructed in the following way:

They’re lazy and entitled and apathetic, and they just want everything handed to them. And it’s not like us when we were young, and we worked hard for what we did. You know, we walked through the snow to get to school. These young people with their lattes! And I mean, my God, the number of articles out there talking about, oh, the young people with their lattes, right? It just never ends. [...] I think there’s some real intergenerational tyranny going on with respect to young people in our world right now.

Vincent goes on to contrast young people’s economic realities with those of the baby boomer generation, whom he regards as having “incredible support from government” in their youth. He explains that “most baby boomers paid the equivalent of—in today’s dollars—about \$500 a year in university tuition.” This older generation is now “demanding that they have their taxes cut and that austerity is imposed on young people.” In contrast, “young people are saying that they want to *not* live in extreme poverty and maybe have a decent lifestyle,” but they end up “having all of these narratives about being lazy and apathetic directed at them.”

The popularity of financial education programs, according to Vincent, “is really feeding on this narrative about millennials and about young people that has been manufactured by the media in part to justify and rationalize the austerity that has really victimized young people and also older people—the most vulnerable in society—in a very extreme way.” These narratives ring

untrue for Vincent, particularly because he recalls the 2012 Québec Student Strikes against tuition fee increases when it was “young people and their determination” that “toppled the government here in Québec.” Referring to 2012, Vincent notes that he has not seen “a political movement as determined, and committed, and full of individuals willing to make sacrifices for our collective future” paralleled “by any generation, anywhere in Canada, in a long, long time.” He concludes that we may be seeing a similar movement led by young people this year “with the Friday strikes for climate justice.”

Other teachers invoke a similar line of thinking regarding the push for financial literacy education. Eric, for instance, suggests that “it’s a way to marginalize students who are marginalized, young people who maybe aren’t born into a position of privilege.” Noah proposes that dominant narratives about people being “young,” or “lazy,” or not knowing how to “deal with money” are “a way of avoiding cognitive dissonance where it doesn’t challenge some beliefs that they already hold if they just shift the blame to [...] Black people or students who are in poverty.” At its core, for Noah, this kind of narrative “supports the systemic issues that are already there as opposed to challenging existing policies or issues that exist in society.”

Andrew, too, touches on how the media pushes certain narratives and who benefits from the dominant stories that circulate, but he also contextualizes the conversation around how parents may approach financial literacy education. Andrew wonders whether financial literacy education resonates with parents because of its quantitative nature. As Andrew sees it, traditional financial literacy education provides clear formulas and steps that students need to follow in order to be successful. Andrew elaborates:

From the parent perspective, I think it’s often just: “Tell me what I have to do ensure that my kid is okay.” And it’s comforting to know that: “Hey, learn this and you will

be set up.” It’s not as comfortable [...] to have our economic system contextualized and to see that being financially literate in a system that is going to have these [detrimental] consequences may not be the thing that sets up today’s students for success in the future.

In contrast to Andrew, who attends to parents’ motives for buying into dominant narratives about financial literacy education, Maria addresses the issue from the perspective of students. She brings up an example of one of her students pushing back against the personal finance industry’s famed “latte factor,” the notion that giving up a daily latte to save and invest that amount instead can build up significant wealth. Maria recollects a time when she was showing an online resource in class that calculated the expense of buying a latte every day for the whole year. It amounted to \$450, and most of the students agreed that it was a substantial amount. One student, however, challenged this view, stating that they “could live” with this sum, making the point that people have the right to spend their money however they choose. The implication here was that for some, buying a latte may be one of few luxuries to which they have access in life.

Miles interprets the popularity of financial literacy in the context of the human capital theory of education, giving several examples of the ways in which it appears to be ubiquitous in educational discourse and accepted as common sense. His students, for instance, invoke human capital theory at the beginning of the year when Miles poses the question: “What is education?” Though their answers are less theoretical, students’ responses hint that education is “a way to increase your human capital so that you can exchange that for economic capital.” At the provincial level, Miles points out that the new Education Minister Stephen Lecce’s political agenda has focused on “monetizable skills” and workforce readiness. For Miles, “the broad view of education” is to generally find “educational solutions” to various societal problems. Because this vision of education is so common—“that all we can do is ratchet down expectations, and that

we can better ourselves and change ourselves, and we can be more adaptable to labour market needs”—financial literacy fits easily into this worldview. Furthermore, because financial literacy education is “costless” and “easy to do,” it “doesn’t anger anybody.” There is also “no pushback” since it already aligns with “people’s common-sense beliefs,” and “it doesn’t bother anybody with power.”

Tying teachers’ explanations of the appeal of mainstream financial literacy is the recognition that the turn toward an individual framing of financial security is problematic because it substitutes a structural analysis. Rather than direct attention to structures in the political economy, the misdirected framing of the problem appeals to common-sense logic and requires seemingly easy solutions. Furthermore, the focus on individual agency through financial literacy, career readiness, and equipping students with “monetizable skills” for the job market in the face of growing economic inequality and precarity for young people reflects neoliberalism’s “economization” of noneconomic spheres and activities such as schools and education (W. Brown, 2015). The next theme considers the ways in which teachers experience the neoliberal imposition on education in their professional lives.

4. The Neoliberal Imposition on Education

Teachers addressed two ways in which neoliberalism permeates education. The first concerns the ways in which the content of financial literacy education curricular guidelines and courses reflects a broader political shift away from public life and the common good to individualism, market values, and global economic competitiveness. Vincent, for example, sees the new *Financial Education* course as “hand-in-hand” with “the kind of neoliberal economic policies that we’ve been seeing from governments in Québec since the 1980s”:

We're living in a world where people's personal finances are increasingly precarious. And rather than looking to government solutions to solve that issue—for example, rolling back the tax cuts to the rich and restoring the deep cuts to social programs that have been enacted over the various years—they seem to be saying: “We want people to be more responsible with their personal finances,” rather than providing people with the supports to not fall into debt. It's an individualistic economic agenda that looks at debt in personal, moral terms, so that if you fall into debt, it has nothing to do with the broader forces in the economy. It's a personal moral failing.

Vincent speaks “honestly” with his students about “the kind of thinking” he sees behind the financial education course in Québec because he believes that the program is “part of the powerful forces that are out there in society that are trying to shape the ways students see things and, in many ways, impede their ability to think critically about these issues.”

Miles similarly views entrepreneurship education and financial literacy education as the culmination of neoliberal thinking. He begins by discussing the idea behind entrepreneurship education⁷, which is broadly understood as preparing students to become responsible and enterprising individuals:

The idea there is that the economy is so hostile to even just employing you that you're not needed. You have to reform yourself so that you can be put to work. So that you can

⁷ A literature review on entrepreneurial education was beyond the scope of this dissertation, but the OECD (2009) states that education for entrepreneurship “is concerned with the inculcation of a range of skills and attributes, including the ability to think creatively, to work in teams, to manage risk and handle uncertainty. This is underpinned by the recognition that changing ‘mindsets’ is fundamental. It can be described as being ‘part of the entrepreneurial pipeline which starts in education, runs through research to business’” (p. 5). Arthur (2018) argues that entrepreneurship education and financial literacy education work together, with the aim “to improve the economic security of all by creating financially literate entrepreneurs” (p. 437).

find some sort of use. And then with financial literacy education, [since] there's increased inequality and precarity [...], you just have to have financial literacy so that you can make do, and get by, and shield yourself from the worst effects [...].

Miles explains that lacking in entrepreneurship and financial literacy education is a sense for young people that “things are going to get better” or that this kind of education “is going to raise all boats.” Instead, the message is “you need to fend for yourself” and “you’re on your own.” For Miles, this is “indicative of a system that is really cruel” and “a thinking that is incredibly unimaginative and cannot at all believe that our economy should serve us rather than us serving our economy.” This “extreme form of neoliberal thinking” is especially apparent in Ontario Minister of Education Stephen Lecce’s phrase, “monetizable skills,” which, as I outlined in Chapter Two, he has frequently employed to justify various policy decisions.

The second way neoliberal policies impact teachers and their students is through budget cuts to public education that narrow the curriculum and diminish opportunities for critical thinking. For Andrew, the absence of critical economic literacy (see Theme 1) is “part of the sort of overarching neoliberal imposition and intrusion on public education,” exemplified by the current conservative government, “where the focus is on workplace readiness, training” and where, one could argue, “a wealth transfer” subsidizes “the private system in high school, rather than teaching critical aspects and creative aspects to education.” Andrew feels “that curriculum is really narrow, and uncritical, and useful, but is reproducing the structure that we have now.” While one of the courses he teaches is designed to “fill that gap,” there is “irony” in that “some of the budget cuts that have happened in public education over the past few months” mean that “a course like this is at risk.” As a result of the Ford government’s push to defund public education, what Andrew and his colleagues feel “should be mandatory curriculum is actually

being whittled down and more niche and more inaccessible.” Schools are thus left with “individual examples of teachers who do amazing work with critical economic literacy,” but “there is no structural systemic response to ensuring that students emerge with an understanding of how we’re living together in an economic justice sense.”

Teachers, however, refuse to accept this state of affairs, and as I recount in the next theme, they challenge and resist neoliberal reason and policies in their daily lives through their ongoing commitment to critical, meaningful curriculum design and thoughtful teaching.

5. Everyday Resistance and the Impossibility of Neutrality

Teachers push back against the neoliberal paradigm in various ways. This resistance is evident in teachers’ awareness of how neoliberalism works as an organizing principle in their professional environment and in their wider world, as well as the ways in which they take up political space in their classrooms to push back against it. For example, several teachers in this study see neoliberal education policies that call on young people to prepare for the “real world” as ironically being “out of touch” with reality. Miles finds the “entire narrative around financial literacy education” as removed from the “reality of many people’s lives.” He finds it “ridiculous” to propose “saving or investing better” as a remedy considering “tuition fees and housing costs as high as they are.” Financial literacy education, for Miles, is “out of touch with reality in that it’s just not going to deliver” on the promise “to improve the lives of most people.” He reasons that “millennials at this point in their lives have less wealth than the previous two generations” but “not because they don’t have as good money management skills.” Miles clarifies further, showing how neoliberalism operates in educational discourse and reciting its harmful effects on society:

Students now have really large amounts of debt. Whereas I didn't really have that much debt and my parents didn't have any debt from going to university. And that's not because baby boomers have better financial literacy skills. [...] There's less intergenerational income mobility now than in 1970, right? And that has nothing to do with the knowledge base of the individuals, right? It has everything to do with the changes we've made to tax structures to increase international competitions, to automation, to just a roll back of the welfare state.

When financial literacy education advocates make these kinds of claims—that “people are bad saving their money”—he pushes back by saying that “we should change our choice architecture,” so that individuals' choices can include “defined benefit pensions.” Because Miles is passionate about economic injustice, he believes that neutrality is both impossible and undesirable in his classroom. He explains, making a reference to American historian and social activist, Howard Zinn:

I structure the entire curriculum around [the fact] that I teach around my political beliefs. [...] Howard Zinn one time [said]: “You should just be straight up. This is my position, right? This is what I'm showing you. And we're going to look at different positions as well, but this is where I'm coming at this issue from. And you're going to go into another classroom and you're going to get a different position as well.” We shouldn't pretend to be neutral because we're not neutral.

Not being neutral, for Miles, means that in his class the following will occur:

We're going to be concerned about inequality, or we're going to be concerned about anti-racism, anti-oppression education. And we're going to look at Robert Nozick or we're going to look at what the PC [Progressive Conservative] party thinks. And we'll try to be

charitable with your views and show them in the best light. But I have my opinion and I will let you know my opinion.

Miles thus openly challenges the neoliberal assumptions embedded in financial literacy education in the classroom. For instance, he questions with his students the idea that “you should just learn how to buy and spend and then you’ll become middle class” or the idea that having “monetizable skills” will mean that everything “will be fine” in the future.

Vincent, too, sees the narrow focus of financial literacy education on the individual and its disregard of the political economy as the epitome of neoliberal logic:

I can’t teach a course about finances without getting into the issue of political economy with my students because that’s the context in which they’re making their financial decisions. And if you don’t reveal the dimension of political economy to them, then you’re engaging in the worst individualist, neoliberal, victim-blaming kind of rhetoric that there is.

In refusing to teach financial literacy as strictly personal money management and by opening up more critical spaces in their classrooms, teachers challenge neoliberal logic, and their teaching can be viewed as a form of resistance. Teachers, in defiance of the depoliticizing force of neoliberalism that inculcates students into a culture of market-logic and labour-force preparation, know that neutrality in the classroom is impossible and even harmful sometimes. While they certainly do not impose their views on students, “it would be dishonest to pretend,” as Vincent puts it, that they do not “have opinions” or hold particular political beliefs. It would be “impossible” for Vincent to “hide” who he is. “Rather than doing that,” Vincent is “clear with his students that what he is “looking for them to do is think critically,” not “regurgitate” his views.

Some teachers are more reluctant to explicitly share their views, but they recognize that the curriculum is inherently value-laden and thus address this in their teaching. For example, Noah shares that he tries to “stay neutral,” but at the same time, he recognizes the political nature of teaching mathematics:

But that’s why if certain news outlets cherry pick [and say]: “Oh, racialized people are actually not disadvantaged because there’s one person who was able to overcome all that and clearly there’s no more problems with that kind of stuff,” [it’s important for students] to see past that. [...] I always tell my kids that numbers [are] not produced in vacuums. They have meaning because we give them meaning. So, we have to examine where that meaning is coming from and who is giving it meaning...

Another way that teachers exhibit resistance to the neoliberal imposition on education is in their ability to navigate the curriculum to suit their critical teaching. For Oliver, when it comes to the competencies he has to evaluate, he finds that they are often worded in a “very broad” way, so he is able to “creatively interpret those themes” while “trying to do justice” for his students. Eric feels that he is “not constrained” in terms of what he can say, but he knows that what he says “is always going to be relegated to the margins.” At the same time, he sees the curriculum as “flexible in terms of how it’s presented,” and while there is usually “a textbook that has what is expected to be taught,” “if you want to look at it from different perspectives, you can.” For example, when he introduced Greta Thunberg’s speech, “it wasn’t meant to be part of that unit”:

But if you want to put these issues in, you can still slip them in however you want. [...]. You know that’s not going to be happening in every BTT [business and technology] course around the province, but you have influence on the classroom you have. So,

whenever you can, you can try to instill those lessons where kids get to reflect on those issues.

Miles also “plays” with the interpretation of the expectations in the financial literacy curriculum because the only way he finds them “useful” is by always reading them “critically” and “against the grain.” Miles tends to “select whatever the expectation says” and then “read it” and “push it” in a way that is going to let him “be more critical and talk about systemic injustices.”

6. The Need for Community

While teachers see it as vital to practice autonomy when it comes to their profession, this does not imply that critical teaching is an individual act. Teachers express the need for spaces or opportunities to be critical with others. Some, like Noah, describe the difficulties of finding a community of like-minded peers:

I used to be more involved with Twitter and having conversations there. But so far, it has mostly been about mathematics education. And I think even within the curriculum of mathematics education, it is difficult to reach the areas that I would like to reach with what I can do. Finding people to want to talk about it has been difficult for me.

In the same vein, Eric wishes for “a community of teachers with similar values and similar goals in terms of what themes they want to include in their courses.” “Having the ability to work together probably would make things easier” for Eric since “for a lot of these lessons” he is “incorporating these ideas” on his own now. For some lessons, he is “taking from other people, of course, but none of them are coming from other teachers.”

Miles, on the other hand, addresses some of the challenges of getting colleagues on board with more critical approaches to financial literacy education:

When you're working with a team of teachers and you're going to restructure the curriculum that you deliver, you have an opportunity to shift it in certain ways. But people have their own ideas and understanding, and it is challenging to get people to be more critical. [...] But I think it's really important to build a network, obviously. I mean, you're trying to change people's minds and you want to reach more people. So, it's very important to do that work.

Lucas finds that talking about finances is politically charged but believes it is important to convey to his colleagues the importance of broaching the topic in the classroom. He often takes the lead during lunch-room discussions with colleagues, modeling how he takes up financial literacy teaching with his students:

I was saying that during lunch time, we all just sit around the table and discuss personal finance, [and] give a personal opinion. And there is such a perception [that] finances [are] political. So, with the teachers, we do have those discussions. I always present what we do in class, and they always ask me how we bring it up.

The only opportunities Andrew has to collaborate with colleagues are “within the seams” of where they can “find time to talk about it.” In his “perfect educating world,” Andrew would like to have “more time built in” when teachers are not “in front of large groups of teenagers to the same extent” that they are now and where they can “do this kind of meta thinking” about what they would like to do “within the system.”

Vincent also believes there is little space for teachers to address issues around critical teaching. He explains:

I don't think we have enough discussions about critical race theory as educators. And I think it's necessary that we do. I just think it should be seen as part of our professional

responsibilities. And I think our school board has gotten away with pushing these issues aside for far too long. So, the space that I have is informal space with my colleagues. And I should also say, there should be another space that doesn't exist. And that's my union. [...] I believe that teachers' unions should be places for exactly these kinds of critical discussions about curriculum, about the Black Lives Matter movement, about everything.

Vincent goes on to say that if he were the president of his union, he would be leading "Freire reading groups [...] and creating spaces to promote the work of activist teachers." Like other teachers, Vincent would appreciate having more resources from which to draw since critical financial literacy materials are scant. Vincent frames this problem as a need for "quality resources" that are "developed in the public interest" because when teachers start "Googling 'financial education' and try to find resources out there online, one of the first things you'll notice is that most of them are being provided by banks."

7. Tensions Between Beliefs and Practice

All the teachers in this study were reflective in communicating their ideas and beliefs and exhibited their thoughtfulness towards teaching both during the interviews in which they participated and also through the lessons and resources they submitted. The teachers who I recruited volunteered to partake in this study because they self-identify as having critical views towards financial literacy education. Nevertheless, data analysis reveals a wide spectrum of views regarding what it means to teach financial literacy in a critical way. The diversity of views is first apparent in how some of the teachers define financial literacy education. In contrast to teachers' definitions discussed earlier (Theme 2), which depart from conventional notions of financial literacy, other teachers provide definitions more in line with the personal finance approach. For example, for Lily, financial literacy education is "really just understanding money,

how it works, as well as how to use it in an effective way in your daily life.” Lucas offers a similar definition, noting that “it’s to understand how finances work, so how to save your money, how to understand credit, and how to do different types of [investments] with your money,” essentially “just having overall good financial knowledge.”

Jackie proposes an expanded version of the same idea, adding in a self-defence component:

It means understanding the way that the financial industry works and how to avoid paying more than you should in overage charges, in interest, in things that they use as tactics to make more money off of you. So, understanding those and being able to make smart choices and understand that paying off my credit, for example, is better than letting it sit there, even if the amount of it is \$10—it’s still going to affect me in the future.

Noah, too, sees financial literacy as:

Being capable of discerning anything to do with money or institutions that involve money or credit and anything that relates to that. Being able to navigate the different nuances and complexities involved in those as well as being able to interpret from events or news articles that relate to anything to do with finances. So, literacy but specifically for money or financial institutions.

Along with definitions that speak to a more conventional framing of financial literacy education as personal finance management, some of the beliefs that teachers convey during their interviews and the thinking behind their activities, lessons, and resources from which they draw align more with a common sense rather than a critical sense approach to financial literacy education (see Chapter Six for a discussion on these approaches). For instance, Lucas explains that his idea of criticality means “being able to analyze different situations, taking a position in

the discussion.” His example of what it means to teach critically relates to being able to select the best investment option:

Let’s say you have an option of either borrowing money at the bank or going to Money Mart. Just analyzing what would be the best option for you if you have money to [invest]. So, where you’re going to put it. Are you going to put it in a bank or are you going to go more towards the stock market?

Lily sees critical teaching as striving to make her lessons “connect to the real world” and students’ lives “because then they take the lesson to heart, and they actually are more willing to learn and participate within the activity or lesson.” By connecting her teaching to the “real world,” Lily means, for example, being able to teach students how to balance a budget. She feels that students lack understanding between “a want” and “a need,” giving the example of a student wearing a “Gucci belt,” which could have “paid for several months of grocery bills.” At the same time, Lily acknowledges that “there is almost a little bit of a crisis here, especially in Ontario with a lot of the budget cuts,” including “things like OSAP [Ontario Student Assistance Program].” As a result, “students need to have a better understanding of what is available to them out there” since “we’re not always going to get loads of money coming in.” Lily has students brainstorm “creative solutions” to balancing their budgets and together they explore ideas such as having parents help with childcare, getting a second job, or using “different programs or apps where they can save money in other areas of their lives to help with payments and mortgages.”

While it appears that these participants’ teaching is grounded in a more pro capitalist frame, throughout the interviews and focus groups there are many instances in which teachers express values and beliefs in tension with the personal finance approach they are describing. A case in point is Lily, who in another course on equity and social justice addresses the issue of the

gender wage gap, which is especially prevalent “in the private sector.” Lily also shares samples of her lessons, which in attending to topics such as “social stratification,” “the class system,” “inequality,” “forms of privilege,” and various theories including “feminist analysis” and “anti-oppression theory,” demonstrate a critical theory orientation. For instance, Lily describes a PowerPoint that she shows to her class about “wealth distribution”:

One of the things I do is I show them certain countries. Where literally you have aerial views of places like Brazil where you can see the financial divide in regards to housing. And that becomes really interesting because students start asking questions like, “Okay, Miss, how do I get from the shanty towns to the other side?” And I’m like: “That’s a great question because you have to think about all of those factors. Things like your gender, your age, your ethnicity as well.” So, that’s when we talk about forms of privilege as well. All of those things can impact your finances without realizing it.

Lily is thus clearly aware of the structural forces at work in determining economic outcomes, but she does not necessarily transfer this framework into her financial literacy course. For example, when she has “those conversations” with students in her financial literacy class, “and they’re talking about ‘Oh Miss, where I come from, you never really leave that area’—meaning if you’re poor, you stay poor,” she wonders: “How do you move up, how do you teach that there are ways to right your finances and understanding how it works?” In other words, financial literacy education, according to Lily, can support young people on their path to social mobility. The focus in this particular context for Lily then is personal agency rather than a structural analysis.

Similarly, Jackie expresses critical thinking around topics like capitalism, but these beliefs do not always translate into practice. Jackie mentions, for example, that when she studied philosophy, she had an interest in “learning more about capitalism and more about liberalism and

how this society really works and what the detriments are of it.” The question of basic income was “a big one” for Jackie, and she found it “interesting to learn” about “how it might benefit our society.” Jackie, nevertheless, avoids “anything political” because, as a new teacher, her own “political beliefs are still in the making.” Additionally, she struggles with her political beliefs because while Jackie studied “a very liberal education,” her family is “very conservative.” Jackie’s discussion on universal basic income, which she sees as “taking money from taxpayers or from the rich” to “even out the economy,” depicts this tension:

It’s the idea of I want to help people, and I want to try and use my own money to help people, but at the same time I should be saving it to help myself in the future. [...] So, I want to help everyone I can, and I want to put my investment into society, but at the end of the day, are people who I invest in going to make an effort with what I invest in them? Or are they just going to continue doing what they do every day? And not changing the way that they are? So, what I feel would be the tension is the difference in public versus private or investing in yourself versus investing in others.

Other teachers who tend to focus on personal finance management, also express sentiments that suggest a deep political awareness. Lucas, for example, tells his students that “it’s important to have at least the basic knowledge in finances because when you’re going to get called upon to vote, you want to actually understand the platforms of the different politicians” and the “decisions that are being made.” For Noah, an ideal financial literacy curriculum would highlight “the nuances that are involved in particular contexts” so that students can ultimately “contribute to policies being made because they will hopefully vote at some point.” As such, while these teachers note the importance of a civic education, they may see politics as outside the realm of financial literacy education.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reported on data collected during individual interviews and deliberative inquiry focus groups to illuminate how teachers understand financial literacy education and how they translate their beliefs into practice. The data was presented in seven themes. The first theme, “The Absence of Critical Economic Literacy,” set the stage for the subsequent themes, outlining the ways in which teachers perceive a deficit in financial literacy education courses and curricula and in public discourses around personal finance. Theme 2, “Critical Economic: Knowledge, Skills and Pedagogical Strategies,” examined what critical economic literacy learning and teaching demands of students and teachers. Divided into four subthemes, the theme addressed how teachers define financial literacy education, the knowledge and the skills that a critical economic literacy requires of students, and the pedagogical strategies that participants in this study use in their teaching of it. In Theme 3, teachers explained and theorized the appeal and popularity of financial literacy education. While in Theme 4 teachers described the ways in which neoliberal thinking permeates education, in Theme 5 teachers attended to the ways in which they push back against it. Theme 6 addressed teachers’ need for a community of like-minded individuals with whom they can collaborate. Finally, the tensions that surfaced during data analysis, and the evident contradictions between teachers’ beliefs and practice made up Theme 7.

Chapter Six: Teachers' Critical Moments and Orientations

I never believed that I was imposing my views on blank slates, on innocent minds. My students had had a long period of political indoctrination before they arrived in my class—in the family, in high school, in the mass media. Into a marketplace so long dominated by orthodoxy I wanted only to wheel my little pushcart, offering my wares along with the others, leaving students to make their own choices.

— Howard Zinn, *You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train*

This chapter illuminates teachers' political and intellectual identities as expressed through the issue of financial literacy education. I present a series of vignettes to elucidate how personal biography and life experience, social networks, professional and political activities, and intellectual pursuits inform critical teaching. I also spotlight how teachers come to their particular understandings and enactments of critical teaching in the context of financial literacy. The objective of the chapter is to address what we know thus far about teachers who report teaching financial literacy in a critical way and what we can learn from them. In so doing, I attend to the second research question, 2) *How and why does a critical sense of financial literacy education emerge in teachers?* In Part I below, I examine how the participants in this study have come to register and teach financial literacy in the ways described earlier in Chapter Five. In Part II, I tease out the diversity in participants' sensemaking and practices around "critical" financial literacy education.

Part I: Teacher Vignettes

As Seidman (2006) notes, the strategy of composing vignettes is not only potent in what it tells us about each participant but also in the way it unearths salient ideas in the data as a whole. In my analysis I thus compared and contrasted participants' experiences, utilizing what Maxwell (2013) describes as "categorizing strategies" that looked at data across the participants (thematic analysis in Chapter Five is one example of this strategy). While comparing and contrasting teachers' experiences was fruitful, in order to analyze how criticality emerges in teachers, I also examined the experiences of each teacher independently and looked at their individual data set holistically. Hence, as described in the methods section (Chapter Four), for each participant I scrutinized discrete parts of the interview transcript in relation to one another: what teachers reported about their understanding of critical financial literacy; their approaches to teaching it; and relevant components of their biographies and life experiences. I treated each participant's set of data as a coherent whole, examining the relationship within the data set among the different data collected: the interview transcripts; the focus group transcripts; the lesson plan participants provided; and the resources and sources of inspiration they specified. In this way, I was studying how the different types of data collected for each participant interacted with one other.

As a result, my analysis also entailed using "connecting strategies" that rely on contiguity-based relations and focus on seeing the connections and relationships among parts of data (Maxwell, 2013). Unlike thematic analysis in which discrete segments of data are categorized into themes and thereby decontextualized, connecting strategies analyze data in its context. Composing a series of vignettes for the participants was one such strategy. It allowed me

to capture the narrative quality of the data as I created vignettes using transcripts of the individual interviews and the deliberative focus groups in which teachers participated.

While the excerpts correspond to what I transcribed from the audio recordings, in some instances I took the liberty to edit for flow. Important to note, too, is that these accounts are constructed in the sense that I selected what to include, reorganized the data in order to present a logical and coherent narrative and, as is evident in the vignettes, I sometimes summarize and paraphrase ideas in order to guide the reader and provide context. The result is that each profile brings into clear view the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices while placing their critical teaching of financial literacy in the context of their personal and professional experiences. I also focus in on pivotal moments in teachers' lives as related to their engagement with critical financial literacy education. The vignettes vary in length because some teachers participated in more forms of data collection and spoke in greater depth about their experiences.

Andrew: Receiving a Crash Course in Power Structures

Andrew, a social science and arts teacher, has been teaching at the intermediate and secondary levels in Ontario for more than ten years. The urban high school in which he teaches has a strong focus on community, democracy, and social justice. The students in the school are, for the most part, economically privileged, but there are also students in his class who come from families that struggle financially. Along with subjects like sociology and psychology, Andrew teaches an interdisciplinary course that features issues of economic justice. This course is where his teaching of financial literacy, which he calls "critical economic literacy," occurs. Andrew's teaching is highly engaging and often experiential. His syllabus, for example, reveals that Andrew uses a wide variety of creative teaching strategies such as engaging students with real-

world problems by inviting guest speakers into the classroom and asking students to produce documentary films on important social issues of our time.

An ongoing inspiration for Andrew is “authentic grass roots organizing” with “communities on the ground” as well as the responsibility he feels to do something about the future of his daughter, her friends, and his own students as a result of “the mess that we’re leaving them.” At the same time, Andrew appreciates that given the political atmosphere, broaching contested social and political issues can be a fraught decision. While he believes that “we should be making people uncomfortable,” he recognizes that “there is risk with that” given the “almost McCarthyist aspects to the ways certain governments are approaching educators with hotlines or snitch lines for teachers who maybe aren’t following whatever sexual health curriculum they want in.” His general approach then is to “challenge conventional wisdom and understandings” but to do it “collectively,” making space “for different perspectives” and cultivating “empowerment and agency” on students’ end to shape the way they pursue that inquiry.

Andrew’s sensemaking of financial literacy education and his critical approach to his teaching are inextricably intertwined with his professional and personal life experiences. In particular, two critical junctures in Andrew’s young adult life have had an impact on his current views and engagement with critical financial literacy. First was his move to a new city after university, where he found himself “cobbling together an income.” His experience is worth quoting at length:

And I had a university degree. And I wasn’t able to find work easily. So, I was doing this tutoring job—four hours and five hours a day—at somewhere near minimum wage, trying to pay rent. [...] And I was experiencing real struggle of not being sure where rent was

going to come from and not being sure of what I was going to do to get out of the mess. And the whole time that I was living that reality, I knew that I had a safety net. Because of my own relative personal privilege—growing up with two parents who provided everything that we needed—I knew that I could ask if I really got stuck. So, it’s the revelation of the fact that a lot of people don’t have that “out”—that safety valve. I just took stock of how paralyzing it was for me. How hard it was to get motivated to find better work, how it impacted my mood and my enjoyment of what was going on around me. [...] And knowing that I had an “out” through that, and it was still happening to me in this way. It was a real revelation. It was like: “Okay, I need to figure this out for myself, but I also need to understand and use this as a kernel of understanding of what people go through who don’t have that net.” That was a pretty critical moment for me in terms of framing in somewhat of a visceral way what inequality can do to someone.

Another pivotal moment occurred when Andrew was already a teacher. Around 2011, Andrew became involved with the union and political action committee in response to the Ontario Liberal government’s attempts to rein in teachers’ wages and eliminate various benefits. Andrew began “making connections between what the Liberal government was doing” to teaching contracts and “the neoliberal framework through which public schools have been underfunded for decades.” Here he explains making deeper connections to his teaching through activism:

I think the real critical moment for me was working on the political action committee, realizing that we didn’t have the support of the public and wondering why. And getting involved with different leaders of movements who we would invite in and who would say: “Hey, look, where are you, teachers, when *we’re* being attacked?” [...] So, with the

group that advocates for economic justice, it's the most precarious—usually racialized—women in society who don't even have decent, basic labour protections under the old Employment Standards Act. [...] That was a really good crash course in power structures and the working world from a worker's perspective in one of the wealthiest provinces in the world, yet a province with so much poverty and struggle.

Andrew's personal and professional experiences thus kindled the "desire to fill that economic literacy gap sooner for students" than what had been done for him.

Oliver: Constructing a Global Perspective

Oliver has been teaching social sciences in an alternative Catholic (public) school at the secondary level for about a decade. He teaches students "who have struggled in the mainstream schools for a variety of reasons and then ended up trying to cobble together their credits in an alternative school, in a different environment with maybe a bit more supports around them." The school draws "a wide economic demographic" with students who are "living in very, very affluent homes" as well as "students who are homeless and are couch surfing or coming from priority neighborhoods." Oliver describes his teaching environment as "some students really buying into that idea that you can be critical of the economic system we all exist in" and others for whom what Oliver teaches "doesn't resonate with their experience of reality" and who correlate "hard work with financial wealth."

Because he teaches in a Catholic school, there is an expectation for teachers to infuse in courses and lessons "elements of Catholic social teaching." Oliver thus incorporates "progressive versions of the Catholic social teaching" such as "liberation theology," which involves "a real emphasis and expectation of society looking out for the most marginalized." For Oliver, these ideas reflect "the opposite of what the current construction of our capitalist society does."

Though he does not teach an explicit financial literacy class, Oliver is aware that such courses exist, and the aim in his history classes is to supplement the mainstream financial literacy teachings students may encounter in other classes. He thus strives to have his students critically evaluate the financial system through lessons that question ideas about meritocracy and the American dream as well as lessons about reparations for Black Americans and Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Oliver, who identifies as having grown up “in a middle-class environment,” feels that his experiences working in international development in Latin America “and seeing what the global economic order looks like on the ground in places like Central America” helped shape his “global perspective.” One of Oliver’s most formative experiences before he became a teacher was facilitating service-learning trips, or “global inequality exposure trips for high school students,” for a non-governmental organization in a Central American country. During this period, Oliver felt he was able to build the tools that would end up becoming an integral part of the “construction” of his “pedagogy as a teacher.” While working in Central America for more than two years, Oliver sensed a disconnect between “the goals of the NGO,” which centred “around the idea of global citizenship and recognition of injustice in a global economic system,” and some of the Canadian teachers on the service-learning trips who saw the trips as “a charity enterprise” as opposed to “a solidarity enterprise.” In Oliver’s view, teachers were not coming “to learn and to witness” but “to give handouts and [...] build a one-room schoolhouse” and “then pat themselves on the back and feel good when they went home.”

Oliver intuited that this misconstruction on the part of the teachers was due to a lack of “an alternative or a critical framework,” and as he tried to build one “on the fly,” he received pushback. The resistance came from fellow educators who thought that the service trips should

be about “making someone else’s life better as opposed to recognizing your own place in that system that has made [...] Canada rich and Central America poor.” These experiences have guided Oliver’s “teaching career” and his “slant on courses.” Oliver also credits his ability to articulate a critical framework to his own high school teachers who, being “social justice-oriented,” introduced him to issues around economic justice. Oliver’s account thus contrasts that of Andrew, who felt that the absence of critical economic literacy in his education as a young adult.

Miles: Encountering Alternative Arguments

For over a decade, Miles has been teaching a variety of different subjects in an urban school in Ontario at the intermediate level. The school is middle income and “fairly diverse,” comprising students from Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. His teaching of financial literacy or “economic literacy” is integrated into language arts and social studies through lessons about social issues such as automation in relation to increased inequality, disruption of labour markets, and the value of work. For Miles, these are financial literacy questions because “they relate to how it is that we’re distributing and managing the resources that we have in our world.” Miles believes that it is important for students to have this knowledge because they are “citizens” who “should have some say in the debate” and who should care to “make the world better for people that are most disadvantaged.” It is thus “a moral obligation,” in Miles’s view, “that we should bring these issues up and bring them to the fore and get people, get students thinking about them.”

Along with reaching students, Miles is also concerned with convincing colleagues and people in positions of power of the *disempowering* aspects to financial literacy education. Since financial literacy is often framed as self-empowerment, “people have difficulties seeing beyond

it.” Miles thus regularly brainstorms ways in which he can convey that “financial literacy is not only a waste of time—that it is just cruel,” and way one way is to be “very blunt.” Miles explains how he tends to approach this topic:

So, I’ll say: “Okay, so baby boomers, they don’t need financial literacy, right? They have good jobs, good pensions. Like, *I* don’t need financial literacy. [...] So, what do millennials get? They don’t get defined benefit pensions. They get optimism and financial literacy. Right? And this is not sufficient. It’s terrible. [...] It obviously does not have any effect on things like student debts and inequality.

In exposing the fallacies of financial literacy education to others, Miles draws on his educational experiences and training in critical theory. For Miles it was his experiences in school that formed his current worldview and teaching practice, beginning with a sociology course on global issues in 11th grade. Miles reminisces about students in his class “having all these debates about important political issues” and being “animated in their different positions they were holding.” Even though he “didn’t say too much,” he recalls thinking: “This is amazing!” He remembers “that feeling” of “being in there and really enjoying the discussion.” Years later, when Miles came upon the work of Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein, for instance, he was able to make a connection back to some of the ideas he had first confronted in the high school class.

Thinking back to the content of the global issues course, Miles recollects taking “whatever the dominant position was” at that time because as a high school student, he had not been exposed to anything critical up to that point. He illustrates his political awakening:

I would have very regressive views. I would think, why are we giving foreign aid to the continent of Africa? What’s the point if they’re just wasting the money? [...] And the reasoning is [...] I was not exposed to any discussion or any analysis of why it was that

there would be inequalities in wealth or life chances, other than these people are lazy—other than individual ones, right? I had nooooo idea. [...] So, it wasn't until I encountered an alternative argument and I thought: “Oh wow, this makes way more sense. Holy cow. This fits so much better with reality.” And: “This is what's going on, and holy cow, this is terrible.”

Later in life as he pursued undergraduate and graduate studies, Miles returned to some of these notions as he became “super interested in different theorists and in better understanding what was going on in the world and the inequities that exist.” Theorists like Michel Foucault, Paulo Freire, and Noam Chomsky had a profound influence on his thinking. Upon his first encounter with financial literacy education as a teacher then, he was already predisposed to seeing it from a critical perspective, having previously been interested in “work that is very critical of education itself as a solution to political problems.”

Maria: Transitioning from Activism to Teaching

Maria is a secondary school teacher of French and social sciences at a public high school in the English school board in Québec. Located in a suburb, Maria describes the school as “not super multicultural,” with a primarily white student body. Her teaching of financial literacy takes place in the grade 11 Financial Education and Contemporary World course discussed in previous chapters. Because Maria considers critical thinking to be “the most important thing” she can teach her students, she seeks to position her lessons in a broader context and in contrast to the individualistic, budget-focused way financial literacy education is currently conceived of in the curriculum. As a result, Maria covers topics such as labour laws and environmental issues related to patterns of consumption.

As a child, Maria recalls being “always unhappy with the status quo.” She remembers her mother telling her once, as parents often do, to not waste her food because some children do not have enough to eat. In response, Maria recalls asking: “Well, why don’t we give them food?” When her mother replied that it was not “that easy,” Maria countered with: “Why *isn’t* it that easy?” Hence, as a child, Maria believed that “poor people lived in other countries.” As she matured, Maria learned that poverty impacted individuals also lived in her own community. While attending Collège d’enseignement général et professionnelle (Cégep) and throughout her undergraduate years at university, Maria felt “very angry with the world situation.” She became an activist, taking part in anti-globalization demonstrations such as the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Québec City, where protesters rallied against unfettered capitalist globalization as represented by the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) as well as the increasingly draconian police tactics during the protests themselves (Hanes, 2001). Eventually, Maria transitioned from her political activism into teaching:

So, that was my world. I was very “against things” for a long time. And then I did a bachelor’s degree. And then I always worked with kids, and I realized that if I really want to change things—well, first of all, you don’t change a lot by being negative all the time. I mean, resistance is part of change, but you don’t build on that. And I just decided to go into education because I thought I could influence people to be better citizens ...

Vincent: Becoming Political

Vincent has been a teacher for over a decade in an urban public high school in Québec. He teaches social sciences and humanities at the intermediate and senior levels. Vincent describes his school as “extremely diverse” both “culturally and in terms of socioeconomic status,” with students from “wealthy families” and ones from “very, very poor families.” Like

Maria, Vincent teaches financial literacy mainly within the grade 11 Financial Education and Contemporary World course. Aside from his teaching of political economy and aiming for students to understand “that they're living in an economic system called capitalism,” Vincent also seeks for his teaching to be “a form of self-defence” for his students. For example, he knows that “they're going to get bombarded with ads for credit cards and when they do,” Vincent hopes that his students can understand the implications of carrying debt because “digging yourself out of that hole once you're in it becomes a real difficult thing.” Vincent reports that he comes from “an upper middle-class family,” having parents who “never had to worry too much about debt but were also fairly conservative in how they spent.” Being his “father’s son a little bit when it comes to personal spending and wanting to be very cautious and not to take a lot of personal risks” are “values” that “come out” in his teaching. As a result, Vincent worries about his students and wants them to “err on the side of caution,” just as his father had taught him when he was a young adult.

Vincent feels that his background in politics has prepared him for critical teaching. He calls himself “a bit of a political activist and very aware of political issues and economic issues.” While studying community economic development at university during his undergraduate years, he was also a leader of a student union and “heavily involved in the Québec student movement.” This political activity led Vincent to “do a lot of thinking about issues around austerity and social spending and people living in precarious situations.” Vincent, like Maria, has an activist background, but unlike Maria, he has continued to stay involved in politics at the local level. Furthermore, like Oliver, Vincent also worked for an NGO, during which time he was sent to West Africa to do “education work around issues of globalization.” In fact, Vincent credits his learning about “perspectives on neoliberalism” from the time he spent in “the Global South.”

Vincent's personal and political experiences have shaped the following perspectives that he incorporates into his teaching, captured here:

The fact that banks aren't just neutral institutions where you deposit your money.

They're also very much political organizations that have agendas that they very aggressively try to advance. And that their agenda is contrary to the interests of most Canadians. [...] It became clear to me that, wow, governments don't always act in our interests. Sometimes, they're acting in the interest of the rich and powerful instead. And that was definitely a crucial epiphany for me.

Eric: Recognizing Unequal Opportunities

Eric is a teacher whose careers has taken him to various parts of the world over the last decade. Most recently, he has been teaching geography and business in a rural public high school in Ontario. As a business teacher, Eric has had to teach “the standard financial literacy that all grade 10 students get,” but he has also been “able to incorporate some ideas of financial literacy” into various geography courses, although “more into the margins.” For instance, Eric feels that “the theme of people in power using their wealth to promote their position and maintain their power is a theme that connects to pretty much any course.” In his marketing class, then, Eric uses the unit on non-profit organizations to look at the Fraser Institute, a Canadian conservative think tank that is registered as a non-profit organization. Students examine lessons plans on climate change that the Fraser Institute offers to teachers, which promote a “balanced view” and a narrative that is “consistent with less government intervention, which is basically saying climate change is all natural, not a problem—don't do anything about it.” Eric finds that this view is reflected in one of the textbooks that most Canadian students have been exposed to, which asserts that some scientists believe climate change is “just part of a natural cycle” and asks

students to consider some of the “benefits of a warming climate.” Much of Eric’s teaching is thus concerned with the idea of “moneyed groups” aspiring to “promote a certain narrative” about climate change as “natural” and “not human caused.”

When thinking about a critical moment that shaped his current views, Eric zeroes in on a more recent experience as opposed to the other participants who shared recollections from the past. He describes an encounter that, for him, dramatized the idea of unequal opportunity, one which has reinforced his critical views around financial outcomes:

A particular lawyer that I know was making probably \$300-400 an hour, and [I was] comparing this lawyer with [...] a particular student I was working with who happened to have a mother who was in prison and came from a really dysfunctional home. And just seeing how this kid, if he just only had... This lawyer is only in a \$300-an-hour position because of where they came from. There’s nothing inherently better about this person. I know this kid who’s struggling in life, and I know that kid’s going to have a lot of struggle in life simply because of where they were put. [...] How do some people end up where they end up while others don’t? And again, it doesn’t necessarily reflect who those people are, but more the circumstances surrounding those people.

For Eric, this anecdote exemplifies that financial literacy education ought to have “a little more critical understanding” about broader contexts and delve beyond the notion of “personal responsibility.” Eric reasons that students are “citizens” who “have a right to participate in the political process.” As “engaged, active citizens,” students “need to be making decisions based on good information,” and “that information includes having proper context.”

Jackie: Struggling with a Political Identity

Jackie is fairly new to the profession and has been teaching family studies in a private alternative school in a high-income urban neighbourhood in Ontario. As a result, her high school classes are quite small, composed of students who come from wealthy communities but who may have, for example, “issues with addiction” or “issues with family life.” Jackie teaches financial literacy in the grade 9 Family Studies course, and her teaching addresses issues such as consumer awareness and ethical consumption, protecting oneself from the financial industry, and smart financial decision-making and behaviour. Jackie is also interested in issues of “distributive justice” and “basic income” because having studied these in school, the experience pushed her “towards social justice education, too.” Jackie considers herself “a philosopher by nature” who looks at “every possible perspective.” In her teaching, Jackie seeks to deconstruct a wide variety of viewpoints but finds it difficult because of the students with whom she currently works, who she describes as being unable to understand “because of the amount of privilege where they come from.”

Looking back on her childhood, Jackie remembers her family always “being on a budget” and trying to “save money.” On their grocery store trips, they would cultivate in Jackie an awareness that “when you go shopping, always look for the items on sale.” The main lesson about money that Jackie registered growing up was to “save as much as you can because you want to invest in something more valuable in the future.” This meant “buying a house, buying a car” because “the idea of renting or leasing was never there.” Jackie’s father in particular communicated this message through his “experience in the financial industry and his own expertise of knowing when to invest fully in something” versus “paying more for it and not owning it.” Jackie wrestles with the lessons she absorbed growing up because she finds herself

drawn to progressive politics, as summed up by her in one of the interviews: “It’s mainly conservative that I’m hearing, but it’s also liberal that I’m feeling [...] and I’m personally struggling with it, too.”

The difficulty to reconcile the two political perspectives for Jackie is especially evident in Jackie’s discussion of the universal basic income, previously described in Chapter Five in the theme “Tensions Between Beliefs and Practice,” where Jackie vacillates between the private responsibility of “investing in yourself” and the public duty to “invest in others.”

Lily: Putting Financial Literacy into Action

Lily has been teaching in one of Ontario’s cities for over a decade. Currently, she teaches social sciences and arts at the intermediate and senior levels at an alternative Catholic (public) school. As a result, her students “are a little bit older than in mainstream schools” and “have all kinds of different socioeconomic backgrounds.” Lily’s students are sometimes “new to the country, and sometimes they are here by themselves.” She also has students “from low socioeconomic areas,” whose parents have been “trying to make ends meet.” Lily is thus interested in looking at “how do their parents actually work with the money that they have to provide for themselves and their kids?” Lily also has “students that are activists,” who “start to realize that most Canadians don’t have the kind of the money they have so they get a better understanding of what society is like for a lot of people.” Most of Lily’s teaching of financial literacy takes place in courses such as Families in Canada, Food and Nutrition, and Personal Life Management. In these types of classes Lily tends to run activities such as a family budget assignment, the goal of which is to “demonstrate how difficult it is to afford basic necessities” both while living “without a dual-income” as well as when “having a family.”

Her recent and past life experiences have shaped Lily's engagement with financial literacy education. Lily got married "not that long ago" and found it difficult "doing all those things society expects from you like getting a home, paying for a wedding" because with a big family, this "was a huge financial burden" for Lily and her partner. "It took a very long time to pay off that wedding debt because of all the expenses that pop up in a wedding in regard to finances that you don't think about," Lily remembers. She found it difficult to budget for unexpected expenses, and this is why she uses her "own personal experiences with the students to help them understand that this can happen to anybody."

Because her immigrant family was poor, Lily's mother was "very strict on the luxuries" that they could enjoy, often saying: "We don't have money for that, so you can't have that." She witnessed her parents maintain a garden and grow their own food, which offset some of the grocery bills. Watching her parents "living within their means" influenced how she approaches her teaching today: "So, I think it's just the actions my parents did—rather than sitting me down and having a financial lecture—impacted me more, and that's how I look at my teaching of financial literacy. Let's put it in action—because I found that works for me, and I find that it works for a lot of my students."

Noah: Overcoming a Fraught Relationship with Money

Noah has been teaching math in Ontario in a variety of different Catholic (public) secondary schools for about a decade. The last school he taught at had "a highly diverse student population, a lot of newcomers and refugees," whereas his current mixed-income school is one to which students have to apply because of its "prestigious" gifted program. Depending on the mathematics course, Noah strives to work in financial literacy when possible, especially in his data management classes. The goal of Noah's lessons is to show students how to seek out

“additional information,” “understand that most of the time information is aggregated,” and to inquire into “what kind of information is shown or what intentions are there for the audience.” Noah considers his teaching critical because he tends to highlight the “local context” so that students feel “invested” and can pose their own questions related to “their lived experiences with money or with loans.” Crucial to his teaching is the idea that “numbers are not produced in vacuums; they have meaning because we give them meaning,” and these concepts surface in the previously discussed lessons on predatory lending.

Noah “really hates money” due to personal reasons having to do with his family’s financial struggles during his upbringing and also because he does not “like the way that it drives society.” Noah speculates that he teaches financial literacy precisely because of his fraught relationship with money. Confessing that he “didn’t use to like talking too much about money,” Noah describes a critical moment when he eventually recognized that there is “a real need” to talk about it with students, seeing as a lot of them were “generally a population with less of a socioeconomic status.” Noah considers himself a teacher who cares about his students and the “circumstances that have brought them to their current life” as opposed to merely ensuring their “academic success.” He recognizes that students are “vulnerable to information that will shape them” and he thus believes it is his responsibility to expose them to “thinking about anything critically” and “having agency.”

Lucas: Being Open with Students

Lucas has been teaching grade 11 and 12 business classes in a French Catholic (public) school in Ontario for about a decade. The school, located in an urban setting, is middle income and composed of a primarily white student body. Students at his school exhibit “a great interest in pursuing their studies in accounting, finance, and management.” Because Lucas’s parents did

not discuss finances growing up and because it was not a topic covered in school, he feels that personal finance was “the one thing” that he “wasn’t ready for” upon graduating from high school. As a result, once he decided to pursue teaching as a career, Lucas wanted to “give some importance to that field” and ensure that his students had information to make various financial decisions. While he did not discuss a specific moment in his young adult life that had an impact on his current views and engagement with what he would consider critical financial literacy, Lucas discussed how his own experiences have motivated him to be open with his students and ensure that they have the necessary knowledge for economic decision-making. His students appreciate Lucas’s openness towards sharing his own stories about money. On one occasion, for example, Lucas disclosed details about his experience as a first-time home buyer, which including showing students the rates on open and variable mortgages. He thought it was important to reveal “different costs when you buy a house, like your realtor fees, your lawyer fees, and all that.” Lucas was unafraid to present to his students the “real numbers” because he feels that students “often underestimate those costs” and “don’t realize” how “expensive” home ownership is. Lucas leans towards teaching financial literacy in the personal finance sense and avoids what he considers to be controversial topics such as the Black Lives Matter movement because he fears that anything he says could be “misinterpreted” and prefers to “stick to the facts.”

Part II: Critical Orientations

In this section, I bring forth the distinctions that emerged among how participants understand criticality in relation to financial literacy education. I describe the three major orientations—common sense, critical sense, and transformative sense—and illustrate how these are

enacted in teaching using the example of predatory lending. Since payday loans and predatory lending were topics that teachers either brought up or alluded to during interviews, they serve as ideal examples. Table 12, below, summarizes the three orientations. The placement of teachers in the table, however, does not suggest that teachers are located only within one domain but rather that this is the orientation towards which they lean. As I later explain, some teacher maneuver among these orientations in order to pursue various pedagogical goals.

Table 12*Orientations to Financial Literacy Teaching*

Orientation	Description	Predatory Lending Example	Teachers
Common sense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching within the personal finance paradigm • Teaching to understand the world as it is • Teaching to develop habits of “self-defence” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of interest rates and the dangers of credit (e.g., Money Mart) • Knowledge of how to avoid borrowing and falling into debt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lucas • Jackie • Lily
Critical sense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching within the personal finance paradigm but starting to include political dimensions • Teaching to question the world as it is • Teaching to develop a critical understanding of power relations at work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge on how to protect oneself from predatory lenders • Analysis of low-income populations as targets for payday loan outlets • Analysis of heat maps of most vulnerable neighbourhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eric • Noah • Maria
Transformative sense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching beyond the personal finance paradigm to include robust political dimensions • Teaching to understand that the world could be constructed otherwise • Teaching to foster a sense of agency and empowerment to act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the inadequacy of financial literacy education to fix poverty and financial insecurity • Inquiry into root causes of inequality and poverty and conditions under which people are driven to take out payday loans • Understanding of political actions as a way to put pressure on those in power rather than those who are marginalized to make change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew • Miles • Vincent • Oliver

Common Sense

In aligning with conventional approaches to financial literacy education, a common sense orientation entails working within the traditional personal finance paradigm. To give an example, in response to what it means to be critical when it comes to teaching financial literacy, Lucas explains: “Being able to analyze different situations, taking a position in the discussion. So, let's say you have an option of either borrowing money at the bank or going to Money Mart: [it's] just analyzing what would be the best option for you...” Lucas describes a lesson that illustrates this kind of teaching:

I had a group of about thirty students split into groups of five and they had to do research on different kinds of credit. So, I did bank credit cards, others did it on store credit cards. We even researched different places like Money Mart, just to see what the interest rates are in different places and what the dangers are of that. Each group had a different credit option. And they had to prepare a little presentation on that place, showing what they offered, what are the interest rates, what are the conditions, what are the penalties if they're not followed.

The common sense orientation thus requires students to exercise sound practical judgement and responsible behaviour around traditional pillars of financial literacy education such as budgeting, saving, investing, and using credit. It also entails a self-defence element in that the knowledge acquired protects students from being exploited or taken advantage of by disreputable financial actors as Lucas's lesson details. A key characteristic of the common sense approach is that it takes the financial status quo for granted without examining its norms, politics, or alternatives. It thus teaches students to unquestioningly accept the world as it is and to develop the knowledge and habits to survive within it.

Critical Sense

A critical sense orientation is one that adheres to the personal finance paradigm, but in teaching to develop a critical understanding of power relationships at work, it encourages students to problematize the world as it is. Noah, who teaches explicitly about predatory lending sums up the goals of his lesson as getting students “to think about ways that people are marginalized and could continue to be marginalized because of decisions that they've made based on lack of information or lack of desire to find more information or lack of [...] the ability to interpret or understand information.” Thus, while this paradigm includes a recognition of unequal power relations, the focus is nonetheless on personal agency. Having provided students with several graphs of the predictive probabilities for presence of payday lenders by median household income and a heat map of where payday loans are concentrated in the city, Noah describes a part of his lesson on payday loans:

[...] Getting them to have conversations with each other and perhaps asking them: “Have you seen or heard of payday loan centers before? How does it work? Why do you think it works that way?” Or: “Do you know of friends and family that have used it before? Why do you think it happens in this way around the city?”

Another goal for Noah in this lesson is to equip his students with “the confidence to approach these problems” and improve their “general understanding of payday loans,” meaning how these loans “could be predatory and often are predatory, and how they work, what the circumstances are for families who need them, what other options there might be.”

The critical sense orientation thus has students examine structural factors that affect decision-making but nonetheless puts the onus on individuals to ensure they are making optimal choices within an unjust financial system.

Transformative Sense

In contrast to common and critical sense orientations, teachers with a transformative sense mostly reject the notion that financial literacy education can have any real effects on individuals' financial outcomes. Miles sums up this thinking in the following statements:

With financial literacy I try to be pretty critical. My general view is that [...] it puts the onus on the individual, and it doesn't look at the ways in which our society is structured such that some groups are disadvantaged, and other groups are advantaged. So, I'm pretty critical and try to encourage students to be critical of mainstream financial literacy. One of the things we do in class is we also play financial literacy games. [...] At the end of the game, you win if you make it to the end, catching all this money or you answer [...] sort of mainstream financial literacy questions, about needs and wants or just interest rate questions or things like this.

Since “part of media study is you have to analyze different media,” Miles uses the media unit to asks his students: “What's the point of these games?” Students will often answer that “it's good to save money and you shouldn't waste money.” In order to grasp a more critical “framing of financial literacy,” however, Miles has his students then play an online game called “Spent” about surviving poverty. Miles summarizes his students' responses to the game:

And then I said: “Okay, so what is the main message of this? And they were like: “[...] it doesn't matter what your choice is, like how financially literate you are. You just have all of these bad choices. There are just worse and even worse choices. So, some people just can't get ahead, can't win.” And I try to use that to critique a lot of the dominant narratives around financial literacy and get them to think a little more critically...

The game “Spent” is an ideal representation of how Miles enacts critical economic literacy education in his classroom because for him, the “critical” in critical financial literacy education would entail “questioning the status quo, and it would be on behalf of marginalized people.” Miles is opposed to seeing critical thinking in a utilitarian manner: “Should I do this action or this action?” and “What’s going to benefit you the most?” Instead, critical, for Miles, means having “an ethics to it that is aimed at improving the lives of those that are most disadvantaged.” Drawing on Freire’s (1970/1996) concept of “reading the world,” Miles imagines a critical financial literacy curriculum aimed at creating “people who are able to read the world, see how it’s been historically created to benefit some at the disadvantage of others, and be able to act with others to change these situations.” Miles’s teaching then moves beyond the personal finance paradigm, unearths how the world is constructed in a way that advantages some over others, and fosters in students a sense of agency and empowerment to act.

In the case of the predatory lending example, teachers with a transformative sense recognize and convey that financial literacy education cannot fix persistent financial insecurity. They engage students in inquiry around the root causes of inequality and poverty and about the conditions that drive people to take out payday loans in the first place. Finally, they teach about possibilities for organizing and for action that put pressure on those in power rather than those who are most marginalized to make change.

Deliberate Maneuvering Among Orientations

As described in Chapter Five, teachers exhibit various tensions and contradictions when it comes to their beliefs and practices around financial literacy education. The same is true for teachers’ orientations towards critical teaching. At the outset of this research, I hypothesized that participants’ sensemaking and pedagogy would mainly stray from conventional models of

financial literacy education or resemble the various critical frameworks proposed by scholars (see Chapter Three). I found, however, that some teachers maneuver between the traditional personal finance orientations and their more critical counterparts. Two examples make this pattern clear.

First, Vincent, believes that without revealing to students “the dimension of political economy” he would be “engaging in” what he considers to be “the worst individualist, neoliberal, victim-blaming kind of rhetoric that there is.” He thus follows in the footsteps of his “hero,” educational philosopher Paulo Freire, who “believed in working with the poor and oppressed, not so much to teach them but to engage them in a process of collective problem solving and in so doing, empower them.” At the same time, Vincent sees the financial education course he teaches as “a self-defence course.” Consequently, “there are times” when Vince and his students are “talking about individual issues, like what does it mean to run into debt and to have interest rates pile up and all of that.” Nevertheless, because Vincent also teaches “units about how education should be funded in a sensible society, right through upfront user fees or through after-the-fact income taxes,” his “point in doing that is to get them to realize that it's not merely a situation having to do with their individual financial decisions.”

The second example is that of Andrew who undoubtedly embodies a transformative sense in his orientation to financial literacy teaching but also works within the personal finance paradigm. Andrew sometimes chooses to engage the common sense approach by, for example, teaching about “supply and demand curves” and “how to invest in stock markets.” He identifies the learning that students gain from such teaching, however, as “gathering intel.” At these times Andrew is thus working *within* the personal finance paradigm but with the goal of “subverting” it. As he puts it, “we’re going to learn what they do, so that we can be better positioned to bust it

apart.” Andrew’s ability to navigate between the two orientations is therefore done with intent and represents one of many sophisticated teaching strategies participants in this study have shown to employ in order to achieve specific pedagogical goals.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined teachers’ political and intellectual identities as expressed through the issue of financial literacy education. I presented a series of vignettes to elucidate how personal biography and life experience, professional and political activities, and intellectual pursuits inform critical teaching. I also spotlight how teachers believe that they come to their particular understandings and enactments of critical teaching in the context of financial literacy. Several teachers attributed their engagement with critical financial literacy teaching to personal and political awakenings, and all the teachers talked about a critical moment that had an impact on their current views and an engagement with critical financial literacy. I then brought forth the distinctions that emerged among participants in their ideas of criticality in relation to financial literacy education. I described three orientations teachers tend to navigate (common sense, critical sense, and transformative sense), illustrating how these are enacted in teaching using the example of predatory lending.

Chapter Seven: Teachers' Resources, Lesson Plans, and Sources of Inspiration

Interviewer: What you're saying... I don't even know if the word "radical" can contain it because you're saying all of these ways of looking at economics, and the way we discuss trade and productivity—up on a blackboard, just wipe it clean.

Marilyn Waring: Well, I hope the word "radical" does encompass it, actually, because it comes from the Latin derivation "radius." It means "from the root of things."

– Marilyn Waring, *Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics*

This chapter examines the resources and lesson plans from which teachers draw as well as what inspires teachers to pursue critical teaching in the domain of financial literacy education. In so doing, this chapter examines research questions one and two: 1) *What are the beliefs and practices of teachers who take a critical approach to financial literacy education?* 2) *How and why does a critical sense of financial literacy education emerge in teachers?* The analysis in this chapter of the resources, lesson plans, and sources of inspiration continues the exploration from Chapter Five of teachers' practices regarding a critical approach to financial literacy education while helping us understand teachers' critical sense that was the subject of Chapter Six. The rich array of books, films, and online resources in this chapter provides a glimpse into teachers' intellectual lives and how their teaching is shaped by the stories that emerge from the texts that they read.

As Jonathan Rose (2002) posits in his book, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, reading is not limited to books. By "reading" Rose (2002) means that we "absorb, interpret, and respond to" a wide variety of "texts" that include "classroom lessons, concerts,

radio broadcasts, films, in fact all varieties of human experience” (p. 3). Rose’s (2002) book is a “history of audiences,” which “reverses the traditional perspective of intellectual history, focusing on readers and students rather than authors and teachers” (p. 3). In this sense, this chapter is inspired by Rose’s (2002) work, though here teachers *are* the audience as they are the ones “responding” to literature, education, and other cultural activities. For Rose (2002), “an audience history asks how people read their culture, how they experienced education in the widest sense” (p. 3), and it can also “address the impacts of literature on political consciousness” (p. 4). Much like Rose’s (2002) work was concerned with mapping the intellectual life of the British working-classes to show their rich inner life, my research is concerned with centering the intellectual life of teachers while showing how their reading of the world informs their political consciousness and their teaching.

Teachers’ Use of Official Curricula

Most of the teachers in this study use their own resources to teach financial literacy. Vincent and Maria, the two teachers located in Québec, report that all teachers are provided the textbook, Brown et al.’s (2018) *Making Sense of Finance: Financial Education, Secondary V*, to use in the *Financial Education* course. They regard this textbook, however, too narrow in scope. Vincent, for instance, expresses that if he was “stuck” using the *Making Sense of Finance* textbook, “this would be just a devastatingly boring class for my students and just not useful. It doesn’t give teachers many activities for students to do,” even for teachers who just want to “teach from the textbook.” Since Maria also does not “think it was very good,” she makes her own “learning activities,” which she sometimes bases on resources she has “found online.”

Since textbooks like *Making Sense of Finance* conform to traditional understandings of personal finance, they were not included in this chapter's analysis given the study's focus on critical approaches. In terms of following official curriculum guidelines and expectations set by the ministries in each province, most teachers in both Ontario and Québec use their own resources because they generally find the curriculum to be open to interpretation, as described in Chapter Five. Accordingly, the resources the teachers identified using during data collection are the focus of this chapter. In contrast to the previous two chapters, I do not examine the use of resources by specific teacher. Because resources are readily identifiable on a syllabus, to protect participants' identities the resources named in this chapter are not linked to any particular teacher. Though at times I cite teachers who describe using a specific resource I do not identify who is speaking since the focus is on the resources and not the teachers.

In the sections that follow, I present the resources that teachers use, their lesson plans, and their sources of inspiration.

Resources

In total, I examined over 6,000 pages of text and approximately 25 hours of video content. This does not include time spent taking notes, visiting websites, or exploring activities and online games as these activities less easily lend themselves to measure. Appendix L provides a bibliographic summary of all 62 resources examined, grouped into the following categories: nonfiction books; fiction and children's books; news articles, magazine articles, and op-eds; reports and academic articles; documentary films; videos, animation and infographic videos; online games, activities, and infographics; audio; and political manifestos.

Not all the resources were entirely dedicated to the topic of critical financial or economic literacy. Some were considerably broader in scope. For instance, Howard Zinn's (1980/2015) *A People's History of the United States*, which several participants mentioned, naturally covered topics beyond strict economic history. In such cases, I still either read or skimmed the text in its entirety, but I focused on the most relevant topics for the analysis of themes. Below I present the most prevalent themes that arose during analysis of the resources that teachers named (some of the resources were named by more than one teacher). Given the long list of resources, I refer to only a select few, namely ones that clearly illustrate the themes presented. Again, because the focus of this study is on critical approaches to teaching financial literacy education, any resources that were strictly oriented towards personal finance were not included in the analysis. The resources named are multilayered and cover a vast array of topics, lending themselves to endless possibilities of coding. As a result, I opted to be broad in the categories I assigned, even initially, to contain the codes to a manageable number.

Themes and Subthemes

Historical Context and Foundational Concepts. The resources in this theme comprise two subthemes: 1) Economic History and 2) Capitalism, Neoliberalism, and Economics.

Economic History. Resources under this category include resources concerning the history of our economic and financial systems. For example, the first episode of Pennick's (2009) video series, "The Ascent of Money," is "From Bullion to Bubbles" and is based on economist and historian Niall Ferguson's (2009) book, *The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World*. The video examines how money has come to play a "terrifyingly dominant" role in our lives (Pennick, 2009). The episode argues that financial history is the "backstory" behind all Western history, specifically looking at the Spanish colonization of the Americas, the beginnings

of moneylending in medieval and Renaissance Italy, and the origins of the stock market in the first multinational company, Dutch East India Company. The series is meant to provide a historical context to the 2008 global financial crisis.

Other resources in this category take up the ways in which certain groups historically have been excluded from wealth accumulation and exploited for the economic benefit of those in power. One such text is First Nations political leader Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald M. Derrickson's (2015) *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call*. The book details the ways in which Indigenous peoples have struggled through grassroots organizing and movement building to regain the rights to protect and be compensated for the land that was stolen by European settlers. It proposes to build a new, sustainable Indigenous economy that honours "air, water, land, animals, and people in a continually sustaining cycle" and replaces the "outdated and environmentally unsound laissez-faire concepts of economics," which reduced Mother Earth to the "industrial binary of profit and garbage" (p. 11). In the context of the United States, a similar topic is addressed by Neumann et al.'s (2015) infographic, "Just the facts: A nation built on the back of slavery and racism." This infographic presents various statistics that show how modern capitalism and the current economy was built on 46 years of legal slavery, which extracted wealth from the lives of African Americans. It also details the discriminatory policies and laws that excluded Black Americans even after emancipation from being able to access social safety nets and build integrational wealth, all of which have led to the current racial wealth gap.

Capitalism, Neoliberalism, and Economics. The resources in this theme demystify the concepts of capitalism and neoliberalism as well as the discipline of economics. For example, American filmmaker Michael Moore's (2009) documentary, *Capitalism: A Love Story*, is a scathing critique of capitalism today in its portrayal of an economic system that is rigged against

ordinary people. Moore (2009) shows how the dominance of corporate power has transformed the United States from a democracy to a plutonomy, using current events to make his case. For instance, during the 2008 financial collapse while average Americans went bankrupt and lost their homes, banks and their CEOs were bailed out with taxpayers' money. Moore (2009) also offers examples of alternatives to an economy motivated by greed such as worker-owned businesses in which workers have equal ownership and CEOs receive the same share of profits, the Alvarado Street Bakery in Petaluma, California, serving as a prototype. The film also depicts the possibilities of what can be achieved when workers mobilize and fight for justice in telling the story of the sit-in strike organized by factory workers at Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago when it was shut down with little notice after the 2008 crisis.

Canadian economist Jim Stanford (2015)'s text, *Economics for Everyone: A Short Guide to the Economics of Capitalism*, unpacks the idea of both capitalism as an economic and political system and economics as a discipline. The premise of the book is that capitalism is not "natural" and hence "ever-lasting" and relatedly, that economics is not a "neutral" and "technical" study of capitalism (Stanford, 2015, p. 8). The book is organized into five parts that include: the history of economic thought and the unique features of a capitalist economy; the basics of capitalism such as work, ownership, and profit; the overall functioning of capitalism as a system including the distribution of wealth and the relationship between the economy and the environment; the complexity of capitalism and its major players such as the monetary and financial systems and the economic functions of the government; and the success and failures of capitalism and ways in which it could be reformed (Stanford, 2015, p. 9).

Contemporary Issues. The resources in this subtheme broadly examine the contexts and sociopolitical conditions in which financial decision-making takes place. This subtheme also addresses the major challenges of the current era that impede people's capacity to prosper.

Inequality. This category encompasses a wide variety of topics, all having to do with the unequal distribution of wealth and power and its detrimental effects on democracy and the social fabric. The film, *Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies, and Global Economics* from Canadian film director Terre Nash (1995), zeroes in on gender inequality. The film features New Zealand economist Marilyn Waring, who argues that within our global economic system goods and activities are related only to their monetary value, which means that the unpaid work performed most often by women goes unrecognized while economic activities that pollute the environment and fund wars are seen as "productive." Closer to home, the video infographic "Wealth inequality in Canada" from the Broadbent Institute (2014) tackles levels of inequality in within the nation. The video illustrates a study that asked Canadians how they thought wealth was divided across groups. Participants vastly underestimated levels of inequality, assuming that the richest 20% own half the country's wealth and the poorest 20% own about 5% when in reality, in 2012, those at the bottom owned almost nothing while the top 1% owned nearly 20% of all wealth (Broadbent Institute, 2014). Put differently, Canada's 86 richest families own more than the bottom 11 million people combined (Broadbent Institute, 2014). The infographic also explains that this widening divide is a result of deliberate political choices such as reduced social spending that have been made since the 1980s, implying that the ways in which Canadians vote matters.

Other resources look at the other side of the inequality equation, examining how moneyed interests exploit the political system to their economic benefits. Jane Mayer's (2017)

book, *Dark money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*, chronicles how the Koch brothers and their allies use “dark money” that is funded from undisclosed sources and untraceable by the public to manipulate American voters and influence election campaigns towards favorable political outcomes for the rich.

Environment. This category includes resources that address the costs of climate illiteracy on the planet. Resources in this category examine topics such as consumerism and limitless economic growth. For example, several teachers mention using the online resource “The Story of Stuff” in their classrooms. One of the teachers specifically uses it as way to teach critically a curriculum expectation concerning the “consumption of goods and services.” In the words of the teacher, the goal is to get students to “question themselves when they buy stuff.” For example, “if you decide to buy something, you're part of that chain and the chain breaks if you don't buy this stuff.” Because “you're in that chain,” “you have agency in what you consume.” Part of the class discussion involves the topic of obsolescence:

So, when things suddenly are not good anymore, but really they're still useful, but we think that they're not good because we need the new stuff. So, we talked about iPhones, phones in general, like how we keep them for one or two years, and then there's the new thing that comes out. And kids had a lot to say because that's the world they live in. They get new white shoes because their old white shoes are not white enough anymore. And they're still good, but they're not white. [...] And then in the video, there is a quote, and I'll read it to you. It says: “Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction and our ego satisfaction in consumption. We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced and discarded at an ever increasing rate.”

The students were surprised to hear that this quote from American economist Victor Lebow was from 1955, having assumed it was describing the current moment.

The film *Two Raging Grannies* from Norwegian director Håvard Bustnes (2014) takes up the issue of the limits of economic growth. In one teacher's words, *Two Raging Grannies* is:

“... this incredible documentary about these two 90-year-old women who are faced with the economic crisis in 2008 and are trying to understand how society can still be talking about growth and consumption. And that if the economy doesn't grow by 5% every year, it's a crisis for the politicians. And then the documentary follows them as they go around, and they try to get interviews with the World Bank and the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and they crash this Wall Street dinner and get arrested. They are basically trying to say: “We need to think of something different other than just consumption in order to grow the economy because we can't continue to grow the economy forever. There's a finite amount of resources.”

The teacher shows this film in class “because it really does talk about the financial situation of North America really well. And then it's also these two inspirational old women who are just raging. They are fighting against the structures of society,” which the teacher finds “inspirational.”

Future Imaginaries. Many of the resources that critique the current state of affairs also provide roadmaps for change and ideas for reimagining alternative economic arrangements. *Requiem for the American Dream*, directed by Hutchison et al. (2015) and featuring Noam Chomsky, after documenting the vicious cycle of the concentration of wealth and power and its affront to democracy and egalitarian efforts offers a message of hope at the end. Chomsky reminds us that we are still a relatively free society and people can struggle for rights and win

many victories as have those before us who created the rights that we enjoy today (Hutchison et al., 2015). Jim Stanford (2015)'s text, *Economics for Everyone* (discussed earlier), has a chapter at the end dedicated to a progressive agenda designed to ameliorate capitalism as well as a discussion of socialism, which is positioned as a possible replacement. There are also texts that explicitly engage the possibilities of collective action to effect change for more just economic outcomes. In *Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community* by Minieri and Getsos (2007), the authors recount their own experiences organizing together and fighting back against policies to reform the welfare system in the United States. Minieri and Getsos (2007) chart how they began building their organization, Community Voices Heard, and provide specific tools throughout their book on how to build community power, develop and run campaigns, and build movements.

Lesson Plans

Aside from the lessons on the federal budget, taxation, and corporations listed in Table 13, teachers submitted a variety of lesson plans as exemplars of their critical teaching. Not all teachers, however, submitted a strict lesson plan. For instance, one teacher provided their PowerPoint slides, while another one shared their entire course syllabus. The topics of the lessons in the materials submitted were wealth distribution, predatory lending, consumerism, economic growth, reparations, the myth of the American dream, and family budgeting. Some aspects of these lessons have been described in the themes and passages captured in previous chapters as teachers often used their lessons and activities to make larger points about other issues. Table 13, below, outlines three of these lessons in detail, ones that look at issues related to the federal budget, taxation, and corporations.

Table 13*Example Lesson Plans Submitted by Teachers*

Lesson Title	Lesson Description
1 Federal Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define terms (e.g., budget, deficit, surplus) • Analyze the federal budget • Describe positive and negative impacts on students, seniors, middle class, environment, jobs • Take a position on the federal budget and explain reasoning
2 Tax the Rich? Thought Experiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm the different ways in which a person can make money • Analyze how taxation influences one's income by responding to the point of view of the author in two thought experiments: one in favour and one against taxation • Present findings, generate a list of questions, and conduct research about taxation and the just distribution of resources • Consider whether the two thought experiments accurately portray our world and what they leave out
3 Corporations and the Public Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a news story involving corporations and the public interest and identify the issue • Consider questions such as the corporation's interest in the issue, the public's interest in the issue, how the actions of the corporation affect citizens, and government action or inaction on the issue • Consider whether government action or inaction benefitted the public or the corporation and explain your opinion • Connect the issue in the article to at least one issue described in the documentary, <i>The Corporation</i> • Identify an issue/event described in <i>The Corporation</i> that you found most disturbing and explain why • Describe one example from <i>The Corporation</i> where the actions of citizens resulted in the public interest being defended from an attack involving corporations

Sources of Inspiration

When asked what inspired their critical teaching, participants named sources that have been grouped into six categories: people in their lives, philosophers and theorists, organizations and commissions, news sources, books, and other media. Additionally, some of the sources of inspiration overlap with the resources that teachers use to inform their teaching, covered earlier. Table 14, below, lists teachers' sources of inspiration.

Table 14*Sources of Inspiration*

Source	Examples Cited by Participants
People in teachers' lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family (parents, children) • Students
Philosophers and theorists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noam Chomsky • Michel Foucault • Ursula Franklin • Paulo Freire • Jürgen Habermas • Karl Marx
Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning</i>, Chris Hedges • <i>No Logo</i>, Naomi Klein • <i>PostCapitalism: A Guide to our Future</i>, Paul Mason • <i>Black Stats: African Americans by the Numbers in the Twenty-first Century</i>, Monique W. Morris • <i>Rethinking Mathematics: Teaching Social Justice by the Numbers</i>, Eric Gutstein and Bob Peterson • <i>A People's History of the United States</i>, Howard Zinn
Organizations and commissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) • Fight for \$15 and Fairness • Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques (IRIS) • Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)
News sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBC (online news website) • Democracy Now (online news website) • The Globe and Mail (online news website) • Ricochet Media (online community and news portal) • Socialist Register (online journal) • The Tyee (online news website) • Twitter (social media platform)
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.historyisaweapon.com/ (website) • <i>Two Raging Grannies</i> (film) • Intercepted (podcast)

A number of participants shared that their critical teaching is inspired by the people in their lives. Some teachers talked about the influence of their parents that still shapes their thinking today, while others mentioned their own children and the desire to imagine a better future for them. Others, still, talked about the profound impact of the students whom they teach and these young people's energy and sense of responsibility to act. Several teachers attributed their ability to articulate critical frameworks for their teaching to philosophers and theorists they had been exposed to throughout their academic and professional journeys, Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire being a key figure for many participants. In the same vein, teachers mentioned specific books that were formative. For instance, despite originating from the United States, Howard Zinn's *A People's History* was often referenced in the interviews. Various organizations also play a role in inspiring and providing materials for teachers to use in the classroom. One that several teachers acknowledge is The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), the independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with issues of social, economic, and environmental justice. Finally, teachers mentioned various news sources and other media such as podcasts that help them stay engaged and abreast of current events in order to tie world issues to their teaching of financial and critical economic literacy.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the various resources that inform and inspire participants' critical teaching. Most of the resources are ones that teachers have identified themselves and use at their own discretion. They cover a range of topics that I grouped into three themes: "Historical Context and Foundational Concepts," "Contemporary Issues," and "Future Imaginaries."

Resources under the “Historical Context and Foundational Concepts” theme concern the economic history of our economic and financial systems and the historical origins of economic injustice. These resources also demystify the concepts of capitalism and neoliberalism as well as the discipline of economics. Under the “Contemporary Issues” theme, resources tackle the broader contexts under which financial decision-making occurs and address the major economic and political challenges of the current era concerning inequality and environmental degradation. Last, resources in the “Future Imaginaries” theme look forward, envisioning more hopeful alternatives and providing tools to achieve them. This chapter also listed the lessons teachers used to teach financial literacy, comprising the topics of wealth distribution, predatory lending, consumerism, economic growth, reparations, the myth of the American dream, family budgeting, federal budget, taxation, and corporations. The chapter concluded with the sources of inspiration for teachers including significant people in their lives, philosophers and theorists, books, organizations and commissions, news sources, and other media. This is the last of the chapters reporting on this study’s results as Chapter Eight, which follows next, proceeds to the discussion of the last three chapters.

Chapter Eight: Towards a Critical Economic Literacy Education

With deregulation, privatisation, free trade, what we're seeing is yet another enclosure and, if you like, private taking of the commons. One of the things I find very interesting in our current debates is this concept of who creates wealth. That wealth is only created when it's owned privately. What would you call clean water, fresh air, a safe environment? Are they not a form of wealth? And why does it only become wealth when some entity puts a fence around it and declares it private property? Well, you know, that's not wealth creation. That's wealth usurpation.

– Elaine Bernard, *The Corporation*

In this chapter, I discuss the findings from previous chapters according to the three research questions that guided this study:

- 1) *What are the beliefs and practices of teachers who take a critical approach to financial literacy education?*
- 2) *How and why does a critical sense of financial literacy education emerge in these teachers?*
- 3) *To what extent do teachers' beliefs and practices reflect or resist prevalent models of financial literacy?*

I then address the implications of these findings in relation to ideas about financial literacy education and criticality, what they mean for the social studies curriculum, and how they concern teachers as intellectuals, including in relation to teacher neutrality and autonomy.

1. The Beliefs and Practices of Teachers

The first research question aimed to investigate the beliefs and practices of teachers who take a critical approach to financial literacy education. I thus sought to provide evidence of how teachers make sense of financial literacy education and how they translate their thinking into teaching practice.

Critical and Transformative Teaching

The teachers in this study engage artfully in rigorous and thoughtful teaching. This is especially evident in the frameworks presented for a critical economic education in Chapter Five showing how teachers possess a wealth of knowledge related to content and skills in this area while employing a wide repertoire of pedagogical strategies with intellectual heft. In particular, participants leaning towards critical and transformative approaches (7 in total) as defined in this study demonstrate especially purposeful, creative, and rigorous teaching. They examine wealth distribution in the context of the capitalist economic system, explore concepts of fairness and responsibility as well as the deleterious effects of concentrated wealth and power on the democratic process. Teachers also take up intricate arguments from political philosophy around distributive justice and the tax system, make interdisciplinary connections between disciplines as diverse as history, business, and economics, and educate students about the kinds of policies and collective struggles that have led to better economic outcomes for various groups of people. At the same time, they investigate present-day power relations and unjust social structures that shape individuals' financial lives, relating these to the long histories of settler-colonialism and slavery with the aim to disrupt grand narratives of progress. Discussions related to ecological sustainability, such as hyper-consumerism and the limitations of economic growth theories, also characterize their teaching. Calling attention to the constructed nature of the current economic

system, teachers not only interrogate its defects but also encourage students to imagine alternative ways of organizing the economy that bend towards justice. The themes that emerged in the analysis of the resources show clear alignment between the content that teachers describe as necessary for a critical economic literacy education and their self-reported pedagogy.

In addition to the content described so far, teachers work to foster the essential skills for students to be well versed in critical economic literacy. For example, they help students acquire the necessary vocabulary, conceptual lenses, and theoretical tools to scrutinize the logic of neoclassical economics and to navigate complex arguments from experts in the discipline. Teachers are also concerned with preparing students to examine multiple perspectives and take a stance that is supported by evidence in relation to mainstream and critical perspectives surrounding economic issues. Challenging dominant narratives around meritocracy and the American dream is also a key skill for students to acquire. Finally, teachers aspire to develop an ethics of concern for communities impacted by various systems of oppression, cultivate an understanding that individual and collective action can effect change, and equip students with the skills to make informed decisions about activism as well as how to mobilize with others.

To aid students in mastering the various knowledge and skills associated with critical economic literacy, teachers artfully engage a variety of pedagogical strategies. They identify and unpack thorny concepts such as capitalism and neoliberalism, employ cognitive shifts that have students conceptualize themselves as workers in the context of labour and economic justice, and denaturalize assumptions around topics such as wage labour and automation. Furthermore, teachers pose “big” questions that compel students to engage in thinking critically about how economics structures their world. They democratize inquiry by building trust and fostering agency and empowerment on the part of students. Along the way, teachers make connections

among students' lived experiences, their local contexts, and the larger socioeconomic and political milieu.

Common Sense Teaching

Three of the teachers in this study lean heavily towards the common sense approach in their teaching of financial literacy. In contrast to the critical economic literacy framework that the other teachers advance, these teachers operate within the traditional personal finance paradigm. Their lessons require students to exercise sound practical judgement and responsible behaviour around traditional pillars of financial literacy education such as budgeting, saving, investing, and using credit. Unlike teachers who employ a transformative sense in their teaching, these teachers do not devote their lessons to questioning the economic status quo or examining its norms, politics, or alternatives. Instead, teachers who take a common sense approach focus on developing in students the knowledge, habits, and skills to live in the world as constructed. Lessons focus on consumer awareness and making sound financial decisions, including learning how to make a family budget, borrow responsibly, and protect oneself from predatory lending and debt.

2. A Critical Sense of Financial Literacy Education

The second research question examines how and why a critical sense of financial literacy education emerges in teachers, drawing on the findings from Chapter Six. This chapter was primarily concerned with an exploration of teachers' critical orientations (how they understand and enact criticality in relation to financial literacy education) as well as the critical moments that brought them to their particular understandings of financial literacy education (how teachers' ideas about financial literacy education are informed by the ways in which they inhabit the

world). This section examines the recurring theme of politics that imbues these two interrelated questions, sometimes overlapping, too, with the first research question (around the beliefs and practices of teachers who take a critical approach to financial literacy education) on which Chapter Five focused.

The Politics of the Moment

As described in the introductory chapters, this study took place against the backdrop of global and local mobilizing efforts against antidemocratic leaders and governments, climate change, systemic racism and police brutality, as well as attacks on public education and the teaching profession. The findings in this study show that teachers leverage current events and collective political expression as teachable moments for student learning and development. Responding to these openings, teachers engage students in lessons that tie financial literacy content to current economic and sociopolitical crises by tackling topics such as ecological sustainability and the soaring racial economic divide. For example, both Eric and Andrew present to students Greta Thunberg's speech at the U.N. Climate Action Summit, prompting them to question naturalized ideas about the limits of economic growth or to channel their energy into political action. Vincent and Miles, to give another example, turn to the Black Lives Matter Movement to show how the framing of financial literacy is amiss. In teaching about the Tulsa Race Massacre, for example, Vincent intends to help students understand the problematic discourse in the media around protests, riots, and looting as well as the ways in which the long history of subjugation and exploitation of Black communities has contributed to the yawning racial wealth gap. Miles, on the other hand, leverages school board policies and the current political moment in which schools are pivoting towards anti-oppressive education to engage his

colleagues in conversations about the ways in which financial literacy education could be understood as white supremacist.

The Politics of Teaching Financial Literacy

Teachers in this study who are politically active and civically minded are more likely to approach their teaching with a critical or transformative sense. For example, teachers such as Vincent, Maria, and Andrew report that their experiences with activism have had a profound impact on their views and critical engagement with financial literacy. Though the participant sample is small, the results reflect Rogers and Westheimer's (2017) conclusion from their research study of public high school social studies teachers' engagement with the topic of rising economic inequality that "more civically engaged teachers have a more robust view of the demands of democracy" (p. 1054). Rogers and Westheimer (2017) found that the degree to which teachers are politically engaged outside of the classroom is a strong predictor of the frequency and approaches to engaging students with issues related to economic inequality. Teaching about economic inequality is not only more prevalent among civically engaged teachers but these teachers are able to engage students in sophisticated ways with the economic, political, and social implications of growing economic disparities in the United States and globally (Rogers & Westheimer, 2017). Since financial literacy education also deals with questions about wealth distribution, it is decidedly political. The teachers in this study who engage financial literacy as it relates to normative questions about wealth and power attribute this approach to the political experiences that have shaped them, such as Vincent's involvement in the Québec student movement, Maria's participation in anti-globalization demonstrations, or Andrew's activities in the teachers' union and political action committee.

Political teaching, however, is not only about the content taught. Teachers with a transformative sense do more than include critical material in their teaching; they also question the very idea of financial literacy education on a meta level. These teachers exhibit an innate awareness of Mehta's (2013) theory that paradigms have the power to shape politics. They thus work to disrupt the notion that financial illiteracy can explain the problems of persistent economic insecurity or poverty and that the antidote, financial literacy education, ought to be the remedy. Miles, for example, argues that baby boomers do not need financial literacy because they benefit from social supports such as defined pension plans whereas younger generations, under a neoliberal restructuring of the state, are forced to rely mainly on themselves, turning to market solutions such as entrepreneurship and financial literacy. These teachers also have a sense that those in power operate to shift the terms of the game, as evidenced by Vincent's analysis of the financial education course in Québec. For Vincent, this course is just one example of the ways in which the "powerful forces" in society try to shape "the ways students see things" and "impede their ability to think critically." According to Vincent, when governments and moneyed interests frame debt as "a personal moral failing," they absolve themselves from the responsibility of restoring cuts to social programs and creating the kind of society that allows individuals to not only stay debt-free but to thrive.

At the same time, teachers who do not embrace the transformative approach in their teaching of financial literacy are not necessarily apolitical. Teachers such as Lucas, Lily, Noah, and Jackie who more frequently draw from the common sense approach grapple with their own politics and the political nature of financial literacy education. Jackie understands that discussions about universal basic income, for instance, illustrate the tensions between the private responsibility of "investing in yourself" and the public duty to "invest in others." Though Jackie

does not necessarily articulate it in this way, her analysis is political because it deals with contested conceptions of “the good life” (e.g., Gutmann, 1999) and the question, “How should we live together?” (e.g., Hess & McAvoy, 2015). Other teachers, such as Lily, take up topics related to the political economy but not in their financial literacy classes. For example, in another course on equity and social justice, Lily explores how personal financial security is not separate from the structures and systems in society that constrain individuals’ capabilities to prosper and create unfavourable economic conditions for particular groups. Lucas, overall, teaches within the personal finance paradigm but rationalizes the need for this knowledge on the basis that students need to understand “the platforms of the different politicians” when they “get called upon to vote.”

Moreover, financial literacy teaching, like all teaching, is ultimately a political project. Some teachers articulate explicitly the idea that neutrality is both impossible and undesirable in the classroom, such as Miles who draws from historian and activist Howard Zinn to make the case that “we shouldn’t pretend to be neutral because we’re not neutral.” Vincent similarly reports being open about his political views with students, but neither teacher believes that they are indoctrinating students. Instead, these teachers recognize that financial literacy education is not value-neutral, and moreover, all teaching takes place within schools—institutions that function within and reflect the larger political, social, and economic order (Bartolomé, 2008). In this way, teachers draw from the tradition of critical pedagogy, which concerns itself with questioning specific belief claims within the larger power structures of society (Burbules & Berk, 1999). In fact, teachers themselves identify their own teaching *as* critical pedagogy, often drawing on Freire’s notion of “reading the world.” Rather than limiting financial education to personal finance literacy—or “reading the word”—Miles imagines a curriculum aimed at creating “people

who are able to read the world, see how it's been historically created to benefit some at the disadvantage of others, and be able to act with others to change these situations.” In line with critical pedagogy, critical financial literacy education, for Miles, should be employed in the service of oppressed people and in the name of social justice. Vincent, too, discusses being inspired by Paulo Freire, who “believed in working with the poor and oppressed, not so much to teach them but to engage them in a process of collective problem solving and in so doing, empowering them.”

Furthermore, how teachers enact financial literacy education is shaped by their background, experiences, and beliefs that inform their critical practice. When teachers describe the critical junctures in their lives, it is clear that they have been influenced by the stories they learned about money and economics at home and at school, in social and professional networks, as well in the media and culture writ large. Because critical economic literacy is not a recognized subject area in the curriculum at the moment, teachers in this study have also had to educate themselves on related issues and topics and seek out resources on their own. Teachers with a transformative sense link their worldviews to the critical theorists and critical pedagogues described earlier, suggesting that both formal and informal education play a major role in how teachers see criticality in relation to financial literacy education. Teachers’ contexts also matter. Activist teachers like Andrew, for example, worry about the risks that accompany broaching contested social and political issues given the current political climate. At the same time, the school in which Andrew teaches is a democratic community that is set up to “flatten hierarchies,” so not only are specialized courses on offer, but students are part of determining the agenda. The school climate as well as his position as a seasoned teacher enable Andrew to teach in the innovative way that he does. Jackie, on the other hand, is a newer teacher who is still struggling

with her own political identity as it relates to economics issues and social justice and is thus less comfortable straying from mainstream financial literacy education. Jackie also teaches in a more affluent community and laments that sometimes “the amount of privilege” students carry makes it difficult for them to connect to her lessons, even on personal financial matters such as budgeting.

A Political Education

Teachers in this study attribute their critical teaching to a variety of personal and professional experiences that have shaped them. While teachers discuss their varied backgrounds (some grew up in families that were comfortable financially while other ones in struggling households), not all teachers connect their critical teaching to socioeconomics. More striking in the findings is the emphasis on educational experiences, both formal and informal, that have shaped their critical consciousness and political outlook. Writing about Dewey’s vision for economic education, Rogers (2014) notes that forging a robust economic literacy in teachers requires not only scholarly study but dialogue with voluntary groups of peer educators as well as engagement with everyday life and the troubles and aspirations of ordinary workers (p. 421). As if heeding Dewey’s call for educational reform in the area of economics education, several of the teachers in the study reference precisely these three practices. First, teachers speak of the profound impact of their scholastic activities on their political views, including exposure to new ideas and theories in their undergraduate education and, for some, as far back as high school. Second, even though many of the teachers communicate regret at the lack of opportunity to be critical with others, they express a desire to create formal spaces such as reading groups to dialogue with teachers and other members of the community about current sociopolitical and economic issues, critical theory, ideas for lesson planning, and the like. Last, teachers’ critical

pedagogy springs from their experiences with students whose socioeconomic backgrounds vary significantly, and for some, from their political involvement with unions, community organizing, and larger mass movements, all of which speak to the kinds of concerns with which Dewey, according to Rogers (2014), suggests teachers ought to engage.

3. Relationship to Existing Financial Literacy Education Frameworks

In this section, I consider the third research question, which concerned the extent to which teachers' beliefs and practices reflect or resist prevalent models of financial literacy.

Adherence to Mainstream Financial Literacy Education

Critical teachers, in the early stages of this research, were defined as those who think of financial literacy education as something more than individual navigation of a fixed financial system. In other words, this study aimed to recruit teachers who either expand or subvert in some way mainstream understandings of financial literacy education. This research shows, however, that teachers who report thinking and teaching about financial literacy critically understand that criticality in diverse ways, some of which adhere more closely to mainstream financial literacy than I initially anticipated when I began recruitment. My initial hypothesis was that according to the criteria I had identified in the recruitment poster, this project would primarily attract teachers who openly oppose or challenge financial literacy education's core assumptions. However, several teachers in this study saw themselves as taking a critical view, even when they clearly expressed sentiments more representative of mainstream conceptions of financial literacy education.

The personal finance approach is most evident in the participants who align with the common sense orientation, which requires students to exercise sound practical judgement and

responsible behaviour around traditional pillars of financial literacy education such as budgeting, saving, investing, and using credit. Unlike its critical and transformative counterparts, this approach does not problematize the financial literacy education paradigm or question whether financial literacy education can have any real effects on individuals' financial outcomes. There are examples, nevertheless, of teachers with a transformative sense who use conventional approaches to personal finance education to reach a deliberate educational goal. These examples include Vincent teaching his students financial self-defence skills that could protect them in the immediate future or Andrew having students “gather intel” to then argue more powerfully against dominant economic structures.

Resistance to Mainstream Financial Literacy Education

Several participants in this study openly challenge the core tenets of neoliberalism at large as well as the neoliberal ideology operating within financial literacy education specifically. Both in how they think about it and the ways they push back against it in their classrooms, these teachers challenge narrowly conceptualized formulations of financial literacy education. In this way, teachers contribute to the organized political resistance taking place in the public arena against inequality and neoliberal ideology. For example, some participants refute mainstream financial literacy education because they see it as emblematic of current educational trends in which progressive ideals are co-opted and used to disadvantage the students they intend to serve. Miles criticizes financial literacy education for its tendency to substitute private solutions to systemic problems by asking students to increase their human capital in exchange for economic gain. As politicians rationalize neoliberal reforms in Ontario with the “back-to-basics” movement on the basis of increasing students' monetizable skills, workforce readiness, and resilience, teachers work within a diminishing curriculum to offer opportunities for critical

thinking and to push back against this trend. Eric and Oliver, who teach business and history respectively, report navigating the official curriculum in ways that allow them to be more critical and “do justice” for their students. These teachers thus refuse to perpetuate the neoliberal ideology embedded within financial literacy education in their own teaching.

The resources examined in Chapter Seven that teachers use to inform their lessons are further evidence of their commitment to resisting dominant paradigms. Most of the resources consist of counternarratives to traditional financial literacy education.⁸ They challenge distorted representations of history and demystify capitalism, neoliberalism, and the discipline of economics. These resources thus focus on more comprehensive narratives about unequal distribution of wealth and power. They also illustrate inequality’s detrimental effects on democracy and the social fabric while providing roadmaps for change and ideas for reimagining alternative economic arrangements.

Multiple and Contradictory Responses to Financial Literacy Education

Teachers who embody a common sense orientation to financial literacy education, such as Lily, are also able to connect their teaching to the current political moment. For instance, Lily worries about recent cutbacks to programs like the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) and what they mean for their students’ futures. Lily’s sensemaking and pedagogy in relation to financial literacy is thus a fitting example of Hall and O’Shea’s (2013) supposition that neoliberal sense can exist alongside good sense. Lily simultaneously denounces her students’ frivolous spending on luxury items like Gucci belts while recognizing how policy decisions at the provincial level to reduce postsecondary funding affect students’ opportunities. Furthermore, while Lily is cognizant of and even employs feminist analysis, for example, to teach about

⁸ As noted in Chapter Seven, I did not examine resources conforming to traditional understandings of personal finance given the study’s focus on critical approaches.

structural barriers when it comes to wealth building in other courses, the focus in her financial literacy class is on personal solutions to the inequities students face in their lives. Lily thus draws on multiple and sometimes contradictory understandings of the economy and students' relationship to it. In teaching about the power of collective efforts in the face of the Ford government's defunding of public education in Ontario, she positions students as citizens who can advocate for their rights. At the same time, most of Lily's teaching features personal finance lessons, locating students as consumers who must meet their basic needs and learn to balance a budget without building an awareness of the social conditions that threaten their financial security in the first place.

Practitioners' Framework for Critical Financial Literacy Education

As shown in Table 15, below, teachers' enactment of critical financial literacy education overlaps in numerous ways with how critical financial literacy education is conceived in the literature (described in Chapter Three). Table 15 lists the features of critical financial literacy education synthesized from my theoretical review of the literature (previously outlined in Table 3) and pairs them with examples from teachers' practice in this study (as outlined in Tables 9, 10, and 11). Of note here is my decision to initially keep these two frameworks separate. The framework of critical economic literacy skills, knowledge, and pedagogical strategies emerged directly from the empirical research of this study. As previously explained, I did not use the theoretical literature to inform this framework as I did not want to impose a top-down analysis. I was instead interested in documenting critical economic literacy education from the perspective of teachers and exploring how it operates in their self-reported practice. The table demonstrates that some of the teachers in this study enact the features of critical financial literacy prescribed by critical scholars, even if most of them may not be aware of the various academic literature I

have reviewed. The two frameworks in the table are thus mutually reinforcing in that the first column sheds a theoretical light on what teachers are doing in the classroom, while the second column makes concrete the abstract concepts presented in the theoretical literature by detailing what a critical financial literacy looks like in teachers' practice.

Table 15

Critical Financial Literacy Education Theory in Practice

Feature	Critical Approaches in Theory (Table 3)	Examples from Teachers' Practice (Tables 9, 10, 11)
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge and oppose unequal economic structures • Re-imagine and reform the financial system and economic policy by exercising the right to organize, protest, and vote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching about topics such as the deleterious effects that wealth and power have on the democratic process (e.g., political influence) • Teaching by posing “big questions” regarding economic justice and wealth distribution
Position of Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political actors and critical citizens who understand the power structures underlying the economy and recognize their capacity to challenge them • Citizens who have opportunities to debate about financial issues and exercise their civic capacities • Individuals who act as part of a collective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching skills such as navigating economic arguments, examining multiple perspectives and taking a position, challenging dominant narratives, and making informed decisions about how to take action and mobilize with others • Teaching by democratizing inquiry and giving students agency in their learning

Underlying Logic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial knowledge is socially constructed and reflects various power relations in society • Individuals do not always choose the economics contexts in which they enter this world • Economic risks are socially constructed • Collective decision-making and government action are key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching by identifying and unpacking concepts such as capitalism and neoliberalism, denaturalizing assumptions about taken-for-granted ideas such as infinite economic growth, and employing cognitive shifts
<hr/>		
Economic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-capitalist • Decolonial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching about alternative economic arrangements, including post-capitalist analysis
<hr/>		
Framing of Financial Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporal and spatial framing of issues that include concrete historical events connected to place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching about historical perspectives (including specific policies and movements that have remedied economic injustice) • Teaching by making connections to students' lives and experiences
<hr/>		
Sponsors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activists • Critical NGOs (e.g., Finance Watch) and CSOs concerned with questioning mainstream financial literacy and the financial system • Communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching by inviting in activists, community organizers, and other guest speakers • Teaching by using alternatives to official textbooks and curriculum resources

Implications

The Multiple Meanings of Financial Literacy and Criticality

The findings in this chapter complicate notions about financial literacy education and criticality in the scholarly literature. As I describe in the introduction, I was interested in conducting research with teachers who reject the neoliberal emphasis on financial literacy education. I purposefully kept my recruitment criteria open, however, to welcome interpretations

of criticality that were different from mine or from what I understood in the research presented in this study's conceptual framework. I thus invited all participants who came forward and identified themselves as having a critical sense because, in my view, this was key to understanding teachers' beliefs and practices. I also hypothesized that participants' sensemaking and pedagogy would mainly challenge conventional models of financial literacy education and resemble the various critical frameworks proposed by scholars described in Chapter Three. My data shows that the 10 teachers in this study are neither in complete alignment with the mainstream version of financial literacy education nor do they all fulfill a vision of financial literacy in the way I had imagined would be critical. Instead, the result is a broader spectrum of approaches and assumptions about critical financial literacy education than I had anticipated.

First, as shown in the findings, a large number of teachers in this study do indeed reject the conventional conception of financial literacy education as mere personal finance instruction. They instead see financial literacy education as needing to be situated within a historical, economic, and sociopolitical context so that students can understand how we have arrived at a system in which the distribution of wealth, power, and opportunity is so unequal. In this way, teachers subvert the neoliberal ideology that dominates public and political discussions around financial literacy education as well as in K-12 curriculum policy documents and educational research. Second, the results from this research show the definitions of criticality are multiple and contested. While all the participants recruited for this study came forward because they view their teaching as critical, findings show that what they believe to be critical teaching varies significantly. Furthermore, participants' notions of what it means to teach financial literacy education and what it means to be critical are interrelated. Teachers who exhibit a common sense orientation are more likely to adhere to common sense thinking and neoliberal understandings of

financial literacy education. Teachers who lean towards a critical or transformative sense, on the other hand, tend to draw more often from the critical thinking and critical pedagogy traditions and teach within the critical economic literacy framework outlined in this study that corresponds to conceptions of financial literacy as outlined by critical scholars. When they do negotiate the tensions between a social analysis and an individual-level analysis, they do so purposefully and with explicit pedagogical goals in mind.

Given that this study sought to find the most critical of financial literacy educators in Ontario and Québec, the fact that at least three of the teachers in this study who self-identified as taking a critical approach to financial literacy education at the time of recruitment fall under the common sense orientation is striking. Their understandings and enactment of criticality depart significantly from that of the critical economic literacy education implemented by their peers with critical and transformative approaches. Amongst self-identifying “critical” teachers who came forward for this project, some have not fully analyzed their ideological positions in depth or are still struggling with their political identities and thus draw on varied and sometimes contradictory perspectives. Others are unable to transfer their critical ideas into the domain of financial literacy education specifically, even if they enact critical teaching in other spaces. Others, yet, have neither been exposed to nor fully grasped ideas about the kind of teaching for which critical scholars advocate. These findings are far-reaching, raising questions about the likelihood of similar patterns within the larger population of Canadian educators outside this case study who teach financial literacy. The findings are also significant for scholars who call for more critical approaches to financial literacy education to study further because they suggest a richer and more complicated story than the binary one put forward in the literature on mainstream and critical approaches. These results suggest the need for greater conceptual clarity

in how terms like *financial literacy education* as well as *criticality* are used in teacher education programs and professional development as well as within educational research.

Further, there are several ways to make sense of the diverse manifestations of criticality in this study, some about which the participants themselves theorize in Chapter Five. For instance, in the theme “The Appeal of Financial Literacy Education,” the teachers who are more critical and transformative in their teaching try to explain financial literacy education’s popularity. They attribute its draw to deeply engrained societal narratives about rugged individualism and meritocracy within the capitalist system as well as broader narratives that the mainstream media has pushed about “lazy millennials” as well as marginalized groups in the context of justifying rather than challenging austerity measures. Financial literacy education, according to some teachers, also resonates with the public because it provides seemingly sensible, “easy” formulas to follow in reaching financial success, without having to anger anybody with power. Overall, financial literacy education aligns with widespread ideas concerning human capital and education, which suggest that investment in education can solve various societal problems.

To the participants’ theorizing it should be added that neoliberal conceptions of financial literacy education, whether in educational research, official curricula and other programs and initiatives, or as commonly practiced by teachers, are so dominant (as outlined in Chapter Three), that it is likely difficult for most teachers to swim against the current or even imagine anything but mainstream approaches. Furthermore, as I have both documented and attempted to redress with this study, much of the critical scholarship on financial literacy education is not filtering down to teachers, and, in turn, teachers’ practice is not being considered in the theoretical critiques of financial literacy education. Compounding these issues is the lack of opportunities to

be critical with others as reported by the teachers in this study in Theme 6, “The Need for Community.” That critical teachers find it challenging to find time and occasions to connect with like-minded colleagues has implications for less critical teachers who would stand to gain the most from such collective undertakings.

The Importance of a Robust K-12 Social Studies Curriculum

Most of the teachers in this study who teach in critical and transformative ways report on the relative ease of interpreting the curriculum to suit their teaching of financial literacy education. When it comes to introducing critical topics into courses not necessarily designed to be inclusive of such content, teachers are highly inventive. Furthermore, the range of subject areas in which teachers feature critical economic literacy education illustrates that this kind of teaching is not discipline specific. That said, opportunities to integrate critical economic literacy fully are limited in subject areas such as business studies. This helps to explain why a teacher like Andrew, who has taught a course entirely devoted to economic justice, is able to delve deeper into critical topics than a teacher like Eric, who is limited to courses such as marketing where openings for critical content emerge less frequently. Nevertheless, Andrew recognizes that the move to defund public education poses a threat to specialized courses since these tend to be the first to be scaled back or to entirely disappear when governments decrease education funding. Funding cuts result in increased class sizes and fewer teachers with adequate expertise to teach the kinds of elective courses that normally house critical literacy content. The irony here is that these courses are precisely the kind equipped to teach students about the perils of an underfunded education system in the broader context of eroding social protections and public goods.

As I have argued elsewhere (Soroko, 2021), the push for narrowly conceived financial literacy education in schools endangers secondary social studies courses that have the potential

to prepare young people for civic and political engagement around issues of economic fairness. Without a robust social studies curriculum, however, it is unlikely that more critical and expansive implementations of economic literacy proposed by critical scholars and the teachers in this study can be achieved. Economics courses could arguably serve as sites for alternative approaches in that they would ideally examine broader economic and sociopolitical forces affecting personal financial outcomes. However, research shows that akin to financial literacy, economics standards and courses tend to adhere to neoclassical economics, promote neoliberal policies, oppose democratic ideals, and exclude topics related to race, class, and gender, and other systems of oppression (Adams, 2019; Shanks, 2019; Sober, 2017). This study shows that critical economic literacy education, even when taught as a standalone course such as the one that Andrew teaches, relies on strong interdisciplinary connections and a solid social sciences foundation.

Teachers as Intellectuals and Civic Agents

As Oliver reminds us, important discussions about impending climate emergencies resulting from the “huge debt on the planet” that human beings have incurred are taking place in the public sphere but are not necessarily “filtering down to curriculums.” This study, nevertheless, highlights the powerful role that teachers play as intellectuals and civic agents who are attuned to the political zeitgeist and who then judiciously open spaces in the curriculum for students to critique dominant social, economic, and political systems and the injustices these perpetrate, even when the official curriculum has not kept pace. Though financial literacy education is currently constructed as apart from issues of oppression, inequity, and ecology, teachers such as Miles, Maria, or Oliver not only capably critique this vision in theory but also

weave into their teaching topics such as white supremacy, colonialism, and climate justice that are gaining traction in public and political discourse.

Furthermore, that critical and transformative teachers' practice reflects numerous and diverse aspects of critical economic literacy as conceptualized in academic scholarship (see Table 15) attests to their innate theoretical sense and intellect. In contrast to conventional personal finance teaching that is promoted in the bulk of the research on financial literacy education and that positions teachers as high-level technicians, the findings reinforce that under the right conditions, teachers carry out work that is conceptually rich and visionary. Moreover, the high quality and rigor demonstrated in the frameworks for critical economic literacy education that emerged from this study further supports the argument that teaching social justice education is not at all academically weak but rather a formidable and demanding task (Applebaum, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2006).

Teacher Autonomy. To pursue first-rate, intellectually rigorous teaching, then, educators require the right ideological and material conditions, including the resources and time to pursue meaningful work, professional autonomy, and community connections. Teachers in this study, as the findings show, are best able to enact critical economic literacy when there are designated courses and when they have the flexibility to strategically interpret the curriculum to meet their students' needs and to make it relevant to them in the context of their lives and the current political moment. "The Need for Community," a recurring theme discussed in Chapter Five, suggests that teachers also seek a sense of connection with other teachers and wish for networks of peer support. Important to note, then, is that positioning teachers as intellectuals and civic agents (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1987; Mirra & Morrell, 2011) does not imply teachers performing intellectual work in isolation but rather in community with one another. To teach financial

literacy education in a transformative way requires spaces and opportunities to be critical with others.

At the same time, for education researchers, educators, and policymakers working towards critical conceptions of financial literacy education, this study raises questions about the meaning of autonomy more broadly. Does autonomy mean allowing teachers to do what they will, or does it mean creating contexts in which deeper understandings amongst teachers will emerge? This is an especially consequential question in light of the findings of this study showing how teachers who consider themselves critical educators endorse, in some aspects of their teaching, neoliberal ideologies that eschew critical analyses of power and politics. Given the current political moment in which we are witnessing the rise of antidemocratic governments and public sentiments that decry even modest liberal policies, the issue of teacher autonomy becomes thorny. Oakes and Rogers (2006) note how in their social design experiments that aimed to realize more equitable schooling outcomes, participants appreciated taking part in inquiry groups with other teachers which allowed them “to challenge one another on tough issues” since teachers are “products of that same [troubled] school system” (p. 76). This context transformed the introspection of unconscious classist and racist beliefs “from personal accusation to shared struggle for justice” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006, p. 76).

In this study, some participants themselves expressed the need for the kind of inquiry groups that Oakes and Rogers (2006) describe. They yearned for professional communities (including within their unions), in which they could exchange resources and lesson plans for critical economic literacy, discuss current events and scholarly ideas such as critical race theory in relation to their teaching, and promote activist work. For such opportunities to arise, teachers need the appropriate working conditions that include more time engaging with their colleagues

and collaborating with both teachers as well as other members of the community in and out of schools—all of which are threatened by encroaching neoliberal reforms that promote standardization, accountability, attacks on the teaching profession, and cutbacks in expenditures on public education (Attick, 2017; Bocking, 2020; Hursh, 2007; Mathison & Ross, 2002; Sattler, 2012; Schuetze et al., 2011). Schools of education, in their teacher preparation programs, too can play a role in cultivating the culture of inquiry and community within and beyond the academy that could cultivate the habits and capacities for critical teaching.

Teacher Neutrality. As Heybach (2014) observes, “teacher neutrality is a dangerous, often ignored, creeping practice in perpetual vogue” (p. 44). Precisely because of its covert yet pervasive nature, neutrality can be more insidious than its more detectible contestant, indoctrination. Yet, political disclosure is often conflated with indoctrination and held to greater scrutiny than the practice of neutrality (Warnock, 1975; Westheimer & Kahne, 2003). In this way, dominant views remain unchallenged in the classroom, resulting, not in neutrality, but in “a validation of the dominant viewpoint as the only truth” (Applebaum, 2009, p. 385). Thus, the fear of indoctrination that prevents teachers from broaching contested issues only serves to entrench the status quo, poignantly captured by Paulo Freire’s (1985) oft-cited words: “Washing one’s hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral” (p. 122). Despite the unequal distribution of wealth, power, resources, and opportunities, educational reform efforts continue in the direction of preserving the status quo, promoting a culture of individualism, and inculcating students into a market system mentality rather than developing the skills for collective civic action to address the pressing social issues of our time (Ross, 2017). Nowhere is this more evident than in the efforts to champion financial literacy education as described throughout this dissertation. Furthermore,

unquestioningly accepting the ideology of neutrality challenges the idea that teachers have the professional capacity and judgement to make sound pedagogical decisions, which reinforces the growing public mistrust of the teaching profession (Goldstein, 2015; Journell, 2016).

The teachers in this study poignantly demonstrate in the context of financial literacy education that neutrality is neither possible nor desirable. First, they display a wide spectrum of ideological views relative to the political economy that are tied to how teachers conceptualize critical thinking in relation to financial literacy education. Findings in this study show that some teachers draw from critical and transformative paradigms and are explicit about their political views. For instance, they rectify the failures in the curriculum to name the economic system in which we function and the dominant ideology that drives it. More broadly, in being concerned about inequality and striving for anti-oppressive and anti-racist pedagogy in the classroom, teachers like Miles understand that under conditions of systemic social, political, and economic injustice, and in classrooms which are not equal playing fields, social justice education, as Applebaum (2009) argues, “in principle, is evenhanded” (p. 379). On the other hand, teachers who align more closely with common sense understandings of financial literacy and who thus draw on contradictory political beliefs also understand that teaching is inherently political and value-laden, even if they are reluctant to broach controversial issues in the classroom. This research thus challenges the prevalent idea of financial literacy education as apolitical in financial literacy education research, policy, and practice, documenting its potent ideologies at work.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings from previous chapters according to the three research questions that guided this study. In response to the first question concerning the beliefs and practices of teachers, I summarized the conceptions of critical, transformative, and common sense teaching. Concerning the second research question around how and why a critical sense of financial literacy education emerges in teachers, I discussed the politics of the moment, the politics of teaching financial literacy, and the idea of a political education. In the last section, I addressed the third research question, analyzing how teachers' beliefs and practices reflect or resist prevalent models of financial literacy as well as the multiple and contradictory responses to financial literacy education encountered in the research. I then illustrated how teachers' enactment of critical financial literacy education overlaps in numerous ways with how critical financial literacy education is conceived in the literature. I concluded with several implications of the research, discussing the multiple meanings of financial literacy and criticality, the importance of a robust K-12 social studies curriculum, and notions of teachers as intellectuals and civic agents.

Chapter Nine: Peril and Promise

Here is a society that manifests the most extraordinary contradictions: [...] dire poverty walks hand in hand with the most extravagant living the world has ever known; an abundance of goods of all kinds is coupled with privation, misery, and even starvation; [...] great captains of industry close factories without warning and dismiss the workmen by whose labors they have amassed huge fortunes through the years ...

– George Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*

One of the most frightening things about racial inequality today is not just that it is unsettlingly similar to racial inequality prior to the passage of the Civil Rights Act. It is that it is so similar in such dissimilar circumstances: rampant racism is gone; state sanctioned Jim Crow is gone; Blacks have the vote; schools are formally integrated. Yet here we are. [...] I have this podium right now and I wish I could tell you what revolutionary consciousness today looks like. I am frightened that I can't, that I can't offer a new way of fighting an old problem that will not go away. But there is power in learning new lessons made possible by earnest curiosity and intelligently channeled anger. We all could do with new lessons.

Let us get educated.

– Chris Lebron, *Thoughts on racial democratic education and moral virtue*

The words of American progressive educator George Counts (1932) powerfully capture the realities of the world today despite having been written almost a century ago. Then, as now, masses of people face unemployment and insecurity in the face of the COVID-19 economic downturn while corporate leaders and powerful elites amass great wealth. Chris Lebron (2015), too, reminds us that despite the great strides made towards racial equality, a racially just society

is still beyond the horizon. Though I have shown that a critical economic literacy education, as evidenced by the teachers in this study, is well positioned to educate young people about the economic, ecological, and political turmoil of our times, I am reluctant to suggest that a better financial literacy education alone can solve any of these problems. Too often, as Miles remarks, “the solution to many problems is to find educational solutions to them.” Tyack and Cuban (1995) chronicle the long-standing history of devising educational prescriptions for social and economic ills, including poverty and unemployment, and then blaming schools for not solving problems that are structurally entrenched in our society. Mainstream financial literacy education, as discussed earlier, is an apt example of this trend in the way it has been advanced as a legitimate solution to economic crises and financial insecurity (Pinto, 2013b; Willis, 2009). Likewise, it would be problematic to suggest a more critical economic literacy education can rescue the economy from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, close the racial wealth gap, cure intergenerational poverty, or repay the debt that Canada as a settler-colonial state owes to Indigenous peoples.

At the same time, to admit that schools alone, as Parker (2012) suggests, “cannot override or circumvent the structures of the political economy and cultural milieu from which they are created and in which they are nested” (p. 10) is not to undermine the powerful potential of critical teaching and learning. Education on its own may not solve vast social problems and transform society, but this insight does not imply that schooling ought to be neutral or that it should legitimize social structures of inequality. Resigning ourselves to a simplistic and individualistic version of financial literacy education risks further reinforcing existing forms of oppression that hinder economic prosperity and fairness. This research unearths the concrete ways that pedagogy is political and plays a role in maintaining inequality by showcasing how

teachers to varying degrees resist (or sustain) neoliberal ideology and policies in the context of financial literacy education. Furthermore, the framework advanced for a critical economic literacy education makes the very point that educationalization, or tasking the system of education with remediating various social problems by aiming to change “the hearts, minds, and capacities of individual students” (Labaree, 2008, p. 448), as traditional forms of financial literacy education tend to do, is problematic.

By contrast, a critical economic literacy education positions students as political actors and critical citizens who understand the power structures underlying the economy and recognize their capacity to challenge them as part of a collective. As Oliver puts it, “people in numbers can change things.” In laying out the social, political, and economic backdrop for this research and highlighting teachers’ political engagement including their involvement in various social movements and mass demonstrations as well as how they leverage current events and collective political expression as teachable moments, I have aimed to underscore the significance of the broader social context and collective action. What happens beyond the curriculum, outside of schools, and with others matters. Oakes and Rogers (2006) argue that “knowledge alone is not power, but it can contribute to the expression of power through informed and activated participants” (p. 96). In the context of reforms for equitable schooling, for example, “spreading disruptive knowledge is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the kind of social change needed” (Oakes & Rogers, 2006, p. 92). Similarly, a critical economic literacy education that subverts the status quo is a necessary step but an insufficient one to achieve broad structural changes in the economy. Expanding on Dewey’s propositions for democratic reform, Oakes and Rogers (2006) document the crucial role that widespread public inquiry as well as social

movements and grassroots organizing play in transforming policy and practice toward equitable ends.

Furthermore, this study complicates the bifurcation of financial literacy education presented in the scholarly literature into mainstream and critical approaches, bringing to light the competing visions of the purpose of education with which teachers must grapple in their day-to-day practice. Teachers' adherence to common sense ideology, their critical reading and even subversion of status quo understandings of financial literacy education, or their ability to navigate between the three (common, critical, and transformative sense) domains, reflect composite and sometimes contradictory visions of both education and how we relate to the economy. Just as Hall and O'Shea (2013) explain that we are all simultaneously citizens, taxpayers, consumers, and workers and that certain types of logic will seek to persuade us to position ourselves one way over others, teachers, too, occupy these positions and their teaching is thereby nested within various ideological systems and institutions. Teachers also have to attend to the diverse roles that students inhabit as citizens, future taxpayers, consumers, and potential workers, wrestling with sometimes irreconcilable educational goals that speak to larger debates about the purpose of schooling (e.g., Ross, 2017) and the core tensions of a liberal democracy (e.g., Labaree, 2008).

Limitations of the Research

A limitation routinely attributed to qualitative approaches such as case study research is that they are neither externally generalizable nor representative (Merriam, 2009). However, as Flyvberg (2006) reminds us, context-specific knowledge is particularly valuable since universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs anyway, and the force of a single example is often

deeply underestimated (Merriam, 2009). Maxwell (2013) sees the lack of external generalizability, which refers to “the sense of being representative of a larger population” beyond the case being studied as a strength of qualitative research (p. 137). For instance, qualitative research can provide an account of a population that is illuminating because it is an “extreme case or ideal type” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 137). Indeed, the outlier character of the participants in this study renders this research an original contribution to the literature on financial literacy education as it reveals the rich potential of critical financial literacy education. On the other hand, internal generalizability, “the generalizability of a conclusion within the case, setting, or group studied, to persons, events, times, and settings that were not directly observed, interviewed, or otherwise represented in the data collected” is key in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013, p. 137). As a result, it is crucial to attend to the variation in the phenomena or group of people studied (Maxwell, 2013). In order to prevent overemphasizing common features and minimizing differences, as Maxwell (2013) cautions, this research attends to the diversity of viewpoints and approaches to critical teaching as exemplified by the various tensions and contradictions I noted as well as the variety of understandings of criticality that I put forth.

Another limitation of this research concerns a lack of classroom observations. As described in the methods chapter, classroom observations were not well suited to this research project due to the difficulty of locating outliers within only one or two sites, gaining ethics approval for a wide range of school boards, the nature of how financial literacy education is taught, and the fact that some of the participants were on leave at the time of research (see Chapter Four for details). I thus had to rely on teachers’ own accounts of what motivates their practice and what happens in their classrooms through interviews and the documents they shared.

Another limitation entailed only two of the participants being located in Québec, despite great efforts to recruit teachers from this province. Nevertheless, both participants brought critical perspectives to their teaching of financial literacy, which were to some extent rooted in, as I outline in Chapter Six, their own engagement with Québec's social movements and politics.

Contributions to Educational Theory and Research, Policy, and Practice

Educational Theory and Research

Research on Teachers of Financial Literacy Education. Despite the significant roles played by teachers in delivering financial literacy education to hundreds of thousands of secondary school students across North America, accounts of teachers' ideas, practices, and experiences with teaching financial literacy remain underexplored. This study contributes to the scholarship on teachers of financial literacy education and expands the currently limited scope of inquiry by delving into questions beyond teachers' capacity and efficacy in delivering personal finance lessons. It thus provides a wider variety of experiences of teaching financial literacy than is currently available in the literature. More broadly, results of this study provide empirical insights into teachers' political beliefs and intellectual lives as expressed through the issue of financial literacy education.

Empirical Research on Critical Financial Literacy Education. This research instantiates the theoretical body of scholarship presented in Chapter Three that critiques existing approaches while examining normative questions about the state of financial literacy education with empirical evidence. In other words, this study illustrates the theoretical problems with financial literacy education from the perspective of teachers in the field. It furthermore substantiates normative explorations in the literature concerning what critical financial literacy

ought to look like with specific and concrete examples of critical economic literacy teaching in practice. At the same time, this study is instructive because rather than focusing only on critique, it showcases exemplary practice and rich potential for transforming financial literacy education. This contribution is significant because it acts as a connective tissue between the level of abstract debate about financial literacy's educational value among scholars and the level of practice enacted by actual teachers. Last, this research complicates the notion of criticality as it relates to financial literacy education, showing its multiple interpretations. It also complicates the theoretical literature on critical financial literacy education, which presents mainstream and critical versions as dichotomous, showing that teachers' practice is less binary and tends to proceed along a continuum.

Teachers as Intellectuals in Educational Research. By engaging with teachers to understand *their* meanings based on *their* engagement with teaching financial literacy to students, this research serves to legitimate teachers as reflective practitioners and intellectuals (Giroux, 1988), capable of weighing in on policies and practices that are problematic and that may not serve the best interests of their students and communities. Furthermore, this research recognizes that teachers are professionals who carry the ability to construct knowledge about teaching, learning, and schooling and are thus potential drivers of educational change within the domains of research, policy, and practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). For instance, the frameworks developed for critical economic literacy in terms of the skills, knowledge, and pedagogical strategies required are derived from teachers' work in the field rather than pulled from preconceived schema in the literature. Furthermore, the inclusion of not only participants' teaching resources but also their sources of inspiration, which comprise various research and theories, draws attention to the fact that, as Fecho (1993) notes, teachers form distinct

interpretive communities whose work includes translating theory into practice. Important to note, however, is that this interpretation does not entail “the whole-sale consumption of ideas created by so-called experts from outside the classroom” but rather it involves “making meaning of the range of theories that exist and using them as mirrors to hold up to current practice (Fecho, 1993, p. 268).

From Technical to Political Concerns in Educational Research. Including teachers in the important debates taking place about the state of financial literacy education and its reimagined possibilities is one form of the kind of public scholarship for which Jeannie Oakes (2018), among others, advocates. For Oakes, a central charge for researchers is to engage with publics—in this case, teachers—to raise awareness of common problems, investigate policy solutions, prompt new questions, methods, and practices—all in an effort to foster democratic, public problem solving. This research also responds to Oakes’ (2018) call to “augment traditional ‘scientific’ scholarship that is focused primarily on technical questions with public scholarship that spans the technical, normative, and political concerns” (p. 101) to address persistent social and education problems. As such, this study asked questions beyond whether traditional financial literacy education works and how best to implement it, but whether it is worth pursuing, and if it is, what it ought to look like.

Policy

A Standalone Course on Critical Economic Literacy. The absence of economic literacy in secondary education described by several of the teachers in this study also applies to teachers. When asked how critical they thought they were in their approach to financial literacy, all teachers in the interviews considered their teaching “critical.” Yet, as I have explored, teachers expressed a wide range of understandings towards criticality. A dedicated curriculum is

needed for teachers who have not had substantial exposure or experience with topics related to economic justice. For example, teachers such as Jackie, who appears to be inclined towards critical teaching, would benefit from an explicit course on critical economic literacy. Miles points out in one of his interviews that documents like *Financial Literacy, Grades 9–12: Scope and Sequence of Expectations* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011), which identify existing expectations in various curricular areas that can be linked to financial literacy education, are ineffective as teachers lack the time to search for opportunities to teach financial literacy. On the other hand, while a designated course is available in Québec, teachers in the province denounce this course as insufficiently critical. A well-developed course on critical economic literacy is therefore as imperative for teachers as it is for students.

The Role of Undergraduate and Teacher Education Programs. The fact that several teachers attributed their critical stance to their own education, whether it was their high school teachers, university professors and other mentors, or the ideas and theories that they were exposed to during their academic careers, speaks to the potential of education in cultivating a critical economic consciousness. While there is a growing body of scholarship critiquing financial literacy education, it is not necessarily reaching all teachers. Specifically, teacher education has an important role to play in cultivating teachers' intellectual curiosity to explore questions that go unasked and ideas that go unchallenged such as those concerning mainstream financial literacy education. Schools of education thus have a responsibility to equip students with both theoretical knowledge to evaluate seemingly empowering initiatives like financial literacy education from a critical standpoint and the practical tools to enable educators' pursuit of economically just teaching.

Practice

A Framework for Critical Economic Literacy. This study provides a set of workable tools and ideas about how teachers can reclaim a vision of financial literacy education that is oriented towards economic justice. It describes in detail the pedagogical strategies teachers use to reorient mainstream financial literacy education towards a critical economic literacy. In showing what this kind of teaching looks like in practice, it makes concrete the various theoretical frameworks in the literature that advocate for transformative and critical visions but that are regularly detached from praxis. The results of this research then establish that a critical economic literacy is possible and provide tangible examples of entry points for this kind of teaching for teachers and curriculum policymakers. In particular, this framework is a novel contribution to the field of financial literacy education in the way it engages with current day economic crises, racial injustice, and issues around climate change.

A List of Resources and Ideas for Lesson Plans. This project offers an in-depth look at various documentary sources that can be used to teach critical economic literacy. It not only provides a list of valuable resources for teachers to turn to but also describes how the teachers in this study implement these in the classroom.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

Research with Youth

Future research on financial literacy education would do well to focus on young people's perspectives and critical engagement with financial literacy. Just as research on teachers of financial literacy has been concerned primarily with their capacity and effectiveness to deliver instruction (e.g., Godsted & McCormick, 2007; Henderson et al., 2019; Way & Holden, 2009),

studies of youth have mainly measured young people's ability to absorb financial literacy education (e.g., Amagir et al., 2017; Cole et al., 2016; Mandell & Klein, 2009; OECD, 2016).

While this study did not focus on students and youth, interviews with teachers reported in Chapter Five hint that students are eager to examine questions around the distribution of wealth and power and are motivated to act on issues of economic justice.

One particularly compelling matter that merits exploration is young people's concern with precarity in the labour market. Miles, for example, finds that over the last 10 years even among students from families that are affluent or "have great jobs, tons of money, and they're top of the class," there is a growing concern about how they will fare financially. These students have expressed concerns such as: "I'm going to be living on the street" and "I don't know what I'm going to do with my life," suggesting that economic anxiety is widespread among youth across socioeconomic strata. Another significant finding that merits further exploration is "the sense of the moment" and "real thirst" that Andrew observes in his students to act in response to what they perceive as a democratic deficit in leadership regarding the political economy. It is not only Andrew's students, however, that feel this energy to advocate for change. Chapter Two, in setting the context for this study, describes young people's organizing efforts to support public education and climate action as well as the Black Lives Matter movement. Mainstream financial literacy education, however, constructs the problem of inequality as individual and therefore as discrete from long-running social issues. Young people, on the other hand, appear to be thinking differently and connecting various systemic and structural problems with their own lived realities. Research with youth is thus needed in the area of financial literacy and critical economic literacy education, both by way of the content for which young people yearn but also

in terms of the skills required to make informed decisions about participating in activism that Andrew discusses.

Research with Teachers

At the same time, further research with teachers is still needed. This is one of the first studies to probe teachers' political perspectives in the context of financial literacy education and is limited to a small number of Canadian teachers in only two provinces. Moving forward, researchers would do well to extend this work to other contexts. Likewise, more research is needed on teachers' political views concerning public economic issues in light of pressing social problems as well as teachers' beliefs about the aims of financial literacy education in the context of schooling in a democratic society. From a pragmatist standpoint, teachers do not exist to merely transmit the results of scientific results and the educational rules and formulas set by social scientists (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). As such, solutions to problems ought to be sought not by researchers alone but with educators who take an active role in social research and inquiry. To move this research forward, future studies in this domain would benefit from an action research agenda with teachers taking on a greater role in various stages of the research process.

Critical Economic Literacy Education Community

Teachers themselves have a significant role to play in educating one another to question self-evident assumptions about financial literacy education, as demonstrated by Miles' efforts to encourage his colleagues to challenge the tenets of financial literacy education from an antiracist frame of reference. This research thus underscores the importance of teacher community and suggests the need to both create and research spaces where teachers have opportunities to be critical with one another as well as with the community at large.

Further Development of Critical Economic Literacy Frameworks

The framework proposed in this study is not exhaustive of the possibilities for critical economic literacy teaching and learning. It is a result of research with 10 teachers in a particular time and place, some of whom express conflicting ideas about what constitutes a critical economic literacy education. The framework does, suggest, however, that the mainstream approach to financial literacy education is underimagined and insufficient for the current political moment, requiring teachers to think anew. Specifically, additional work is required to further advance an antiracist framework and one that prioritizes the pressing problems of ecological sustainability and climate change discussed by teachers in this study. As Rogers (2014) suggests, the task of developing this kind of economic literacy is vital and not without enormous intellectual and political challenges. That there is a paucity of research examining the possibilities of sound alternatives to narrow understandings of “literacy” in the field of not only financial literacy education but also economics education (see, for example, Shanks, 2019) offers an opportunity for researchers to rise to this task.

Final Thoughts

Critical economic literacy education paints for young people a more promising future in contrast to the bleak forecasts in current iterations of financial literacy education. On the growing popularity of the self-help genre, bell hooks (2000) once wrote: “Rather than sharing strategies that would help us become more loving it actually encourages everyone to adapt to circumstances where love is lacking” (p. 12). Financial literacy education is similarly flawed. Much like literature of the self-help variety that asks individuals to adapt to circumstances where love is wanting, financial literacy education, as it is currently conceived in most curricula,

demands of young people to acclimate to conditions under which hope for a more prosperous future is out of reach. As Miles words it in Chapter Five, financial literacy education currently lacks a sense for young people that “things are going to get better” or that this kind of education “is going to raise all boats.” Instead, as Miles explains, the message is “you need to fend for yourself” and that “you’re on your own.” This, for Miles, is “indicative of a system that is really cruel” and “a thinking that is incredibly unimaginative and cannot at all believe that our economy should serve us rather than us serving our economy.” Vincent, too, decries financial literacy education in its current iteration for being “aimed at helping young people survive austerity as opposed to helping young people prosper and maybe be part of building a prosperous society.” Such messaging targeting young people appears demoralizing and antithetical to the kind of human flourishing for which schools in a democratic society ought to prepare students.

Critical economic literacy education, on the other hand, as mapped out by some of the teachers in this study, offers students a less fatalistic vision of the world. Certainly, a critical economic literacy education cannot educate us out of the myriad economic problems we face; what we need are broad structural changes in the economy and within the sociopolitical realm. However, this kind of education offers a fuller narrative that attempts to convey to young people that unequal outcomes most often are not a personal failing and that they are not alone in the face of economic injustice. In foregrounding the structural factors that lead to inequality, a critical economic literacy education can teach lessons that are “made possible by earnest curiosity and intelligently channeled anger,” as Lebron (2015, p. 164) suggests, about economic injustices and its intersections. This research also makes clear that teachers who pivot towards transformative paradigms do not dismiss the mainstream lens entirely. Some teachers thoughtfully navigate the

personal financial literacy paradigm when they sense that it can provide change in the immediate realm such as when teaching it as a form of self-defence.

In the long-term, however, expanding the scope of financial literacy education to a critical economic literacy education allows teachers and students to reject an unjust economic status quo, and in so doing, fuel inspiration and agency. In place of leaving students overwhelmed with the idea of being entirely responsible for themselves and subject to a self-improvement *ad infinitum*, teachers who enact a critical economic literacy education offer a sense of hope that a different future is possible. Andrew poignantly describes this process in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the major crisis of 2020 with which I opened this dissertation:

The pandemic, I think, has made really clear that these structures are not immutable—that they have histories, often racist histories and colonial histories. And that we can stop what we do at the drop of a hat—or a virus. And so, in terms of possibility, students should recognize that this has made clear that we actually can make very quick radical changes to the way that we structure our lives.

Andrew's words also capture a theme that reappears throughout this dissertation, one that Maria touched on, too, when she observed the way we talk about the economy as a society, as if it was "some kind of natural phenomenon." Whereas mainstream financial literacy takes for granted that "things are the way they are," a critical economic literacy education reveals the social mechanisms that steer us towards inequality and asks young people to imagine different possibilities. It is this distinction that illustrates the most central idea of this dissertation, namely that financial literacy education is political. In being political, it raises implications for education writ large, asking: "Is education about teaching young people to imagine a better world or is it about preparing them for the world that is, with the assumption that we have to accept existing

conditions?” The teachers in this study have powerfully shown that the former is possible and that a different kind of curriculum is within reach.

Recall Howard Zinn’s (1994) words with which Chapter Two opened: “What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction” (p. 208). Inspired by Howard Zinn, I sought to, through my research, spotlight instances of teachers behaving magnificently, to remind us of the kind of education that is possible and the multitude of ways it can take shape. It is my hope that their stories can inspire members of the wider educational community to make radical changes to the way we think about and pursue financial literacy education.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Certificates of Ethics Approval, 2019-2020

14/05/2019

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE I CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	S-04-19-3392
Titre du projet / Project Title	Critical Approaches to Financial Literacy in Ontario and Quebec: A Case Study of High School Teachers' Beliefs and Practices
Type de projet / Project Type	Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral thesis
Statut du projet / Project Status	Approuvé / Approved
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	14/05/2019
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	13/05/2020

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Agata SOROKO	Faculté d'éducation / Faculty of Education	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Lorna MCLEAN	Faculté d'éducation / Faculty of Education	Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

613-562-5387 • 613-562-5338 • ethique@uOttawa.ca / ethics@uOttawa.ca
www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie | www.recherche.uottawa.ca/ethics

14/05/2019

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'*Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils* (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout événement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Riana MARCOTTE

Responsable d'éthique en recherche / Protocol Officer

Pour/For **Barbara GRAVES** Président(e) du/ Chair of the **Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences sociales et humanités / Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board**

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada

550 Cumberland Street, Room 154 Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

613-562-5387 • 613-562-5338 • ethique@uOttawa.ca / ethics@uOttawa.ca
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10/07/2019

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	S-04-19-3392
Titre du projet / Project Title	Critical Approaches to Financial Literacy in Ontario and Quebec: A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs and Practices
Type de projet / Project Type	Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral thesis
Statut du projet / Project Status	Approuvé / Approved
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	10/07/2019
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	13/05/2020

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Agata SOROKO	Faculté d'éducation / Faculty of Education	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Lorna MCLEAN	Faculté d'éducation / Faculty of Education	Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

613-562-5387 • 613-562-5338 • ethique@uOttawa.ca / ethics@uOttawa.ca
www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie | www.recherche.uottawa.ca/ethics

10/07/2019

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Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'*Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils* (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout événement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Riana MARCOTTE

Responsable d'éthique en recherche / Protocol Officer

Pour/For **Barbara GRAVES** Président(e) du/ Chair of the **Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences sociales et humanités / Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board**

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

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Appendix B: Renewed Certificate of Ethics Approval, 2020-2021

12/05/2020

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Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	S-04-19-3392
Titre du projet / Project Title	Critical Approaches to Financial Literacy in Ontario and Quebec: A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs and Practices
Type de projet / Project Type	Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral thesis
Statut du projet / Project Status	Renouvelé / Renewed
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	12/05/2020
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	13/05/2021

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Agata SOROKO	Faculté d'éducation / Faculty of Education	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Lorna MCLEAN	Faculté d'éducation / Faculty of Education	Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

613-562-5387 • 613-562-5338 • ethique@uOttawa.ca / ethics@uOttawa.ca
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12/05/2020

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Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'*Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils* (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout événement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Marc Alain BONENFANT

Coordonnateur de l'éthique / Ethics Coordinator

Pour/For **Barbara GRAVES** Président(e) du/ Chair of the **Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences sociales et humanités / Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board**

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Appendix C: Recruitment Scripts

Social Media Recruitment Message

Are you a high school teacher in Ontario or Quebec who teaches financial literacy in a critical way? I would like to interview you for a research project on financial literacy education. Please see the attached poster for details or email me: [removed for privacy] Thank you! (For privacy reasons, please do not tag potential participants in this post. Please message me directly.)

Email Script for Nominators

Subject: Research on teachers of financial literacy education

Dear [Name of Contact],

I am looking for potential teacher participants to take part in a University of Ottawa study that examines the beliefs and practices of high school teachers who teach financial literacy in a critical way.

By teachers who teach in a critical way, I am referring to teachers who think of financial literacy education as something more than individual navigation (budgeting, saving, and investing) of a fixed financial system. While there are many examples of this kind of teaching, they may include a social justice oriented approach to teaching financial literacy, teaching in the context of broader economic and sociopolitical issues, or teaching about topics such as the distribution of wealth in society or the ethical implications of consumerism.

If you know of any outstanding high school teachers who teach financial literacy in critical and interesting ways and who could be thoughtful and reflective in their participation, could you please forward the attached poster with my contact information? Teachers who take part in the one-hour interview will receive a \$40 gift card of their choice as a token of appreciation for their participation.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [removed for privacy]

Thank you for your consideration in helping me with this important study.

Sincerely,

Agata Soroko, Doctoral Candidate,
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Email Script for Teachers

Subject: Invitation to participate in research on teaching about financial literacy

Dear [Name of Teacher],

I am inviting you to participate in a University of Ottawa study that examines the beliefs and practices of teachers in Ontario and Quebec who teach financial literacy in a critical way.

By teachers who teach in a critical way, I am referring to teachers who think of financial literacy education as something more than individual navigation (budgeting, saving, and investing) of a fixed financial system. While there are many examples of this kind of teaching, they may include a social justice oriented approach to teaching financial literacy, teaching in the context of broader economic and sociopolitical issues, or teaching about topics such as the distribution of wealth in society or the ethical implications of consumerism.

You are one of a select group of teachers whom I am contacting to help me understand teachers' practices and ideas about financial literacy education. Teachers who take part in the one-hour interview will receive a \$40 gift of their choice a token of appreciation for their participation.

I am attaching a poster with detailed information. If you have additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [removed for privacy].

I hope you will consider participating in this important study.

Sincerely,

Agata Soroko, Doctoral Candidate,
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Appendix D: Recruitment Poster

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 Faculty of Education

Teacher Participants Needed for Research on Financial Literacy Education

Are you a **secondary school teacher** in **Ontario** or **Quebec**?

Do you teach **financial literacy education** in a **critical** way?

For example, do you do any of the following:

- think of financial literacy education as **something more than individual navigation** (budgeting, saving, and investing) of a fixed financial system
- take a **social justice** oriented approach to teaching financial literacy
- teach in the context of **broader economic and sociopolitical issues**
- teach about topics such as the **distribution of wealth** in society or the **ethical implications of consumerism**?

If so, I would like to conduct a **1-hour interview** with you over the phone or by Skype. By participating, you will receive a **\$40 gift card** of your choice. You will also have the opportunity to contribute your opinions to the important debates taking place about financial literacy education today.

All interviews will be conducted in **English**. Participation is both **voluntary** and **confidential**. Spots for this study are filled on a **first-come, first-served** basis.

For more information or to volunteer
for this study, please contact:

Agata Soroko, PhD Candidate, University of Ottawa
at [removed for privacy]

or her supervisor,

Dr. Lorna McLean, Professor, University of Ottawa
at [removed for privacy]

This research is supported
 by the Social Sciences
 and Humanities Research
 Council of Canada.

 Social Sciences and Humanities
 Research Council of Canada

 Conseil de recherches en
 sciences humaines du Canada

 Canada

Appendix E: First Interview Information Letter and Consent Form

Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

Interview Information Letter for Educators

Title of the study: Critical Approaches to Financial Literacy Education in Ontario and Quebec: A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

Name of researchers and contact information:

Researcher:

Agata Soroko
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa
[removed for privacy]

Supervisor:

Lorna McLean
Professor
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa
[removed for privacy]

Invitation to participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Agata Soroko and her supervisor, Professor Lorna McLean, at the University of Ottawa. The project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to learn about teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the teaching of financial literacy.

Participation: My participation will consist of taking part in an interview session during which I will answer questions about my beliefs and practices around financial literacy education as well as how my personal and professional background influence my ideas and teaching. Prior to the interview, I will be given a set of possible questions that may arise during the interview to allow me to think about some of the topics beforehand.

The time needed for the interview is approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview will take place on the phone or by a video conferencing application at a time convenient for me. My responses will be audio recorded only; the interview will **not** be video recorded.

At my request, I will be emailed the transcript of the interview if I want to clarify or elaborate on my responses. There is a possibility that I will be invited to take part in either a follow-up interview or a focus group session to explore in more depth themes arising from the first interview. My participation in the first interview does not obligate me to participate in a follow-up interview or in the focus group session.

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Risks: My participation in this study entails minimal risks. I may feel uncomfortable discussing my views and personal experiences with financial literacy with someone I do not know. If I do experience any discomfort, the researcher will make every effort to minimize the discomfort such as assuring me that I do not need to answer any questions that I am not comfortable answering. I may decide to stop the interview at any time.

Benefits: My participation in this study will contribute to a greater understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices around financial literacy education. It will also allow me to reflect on my own teaching practices and thinking about financial literacy education.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the results of the research will be reported in the researcher's doctoral dissertation and possibly presented at academic conferences and/or published in scholarly journals. However, my anonymity will be protected since any identifiable characteristics such as my name or the school and the school board in which I work will not be indicated in any final report, presentation, or future publication. Finally, while pains will be taken to ensure confidentiality, I understand that email correspondence is potentially not a secure mode of communication.

Conservation of data: The data collected (audio recording of interviews, transcripts, notes, documents) will be kept in a secure manner. Electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer and any hard copies will be kept and locked in a desk/ cabinet at the University of Ottawa. Only Agata Soroko and Professor Lorna McLean will have access to the data. The data will be conserved for ten years following the end of the study and then destroyed.

Compensation: I will receive a \$40 gift card of my choice as a token of appreciation for my participation in the study. If I choose to withdraw from the study, I will still receive this compensation.

Voluntary participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed. Additionally, permission from school boards has not been sought for this project.

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Consent Form for Educators

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Agata Soroko from the University of Ottawa.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details, if I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and notes will be taken.
- I agree to participate in the study.
- I also give my consent to be contacted again if I am selected for a focus group session. I understand that that by accepting to participate in the interview and by giving consent to be contacted for a focus group session I am in no way waiving my right to withdraw from the study.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: First Interview Guidelines for Participants

Critical Approaches to Financial Literacy Education in Ontario and Quebec: A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

Researcher:

Agata Soroko

PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education

University of Ottawa

Interview Guidelines

Thank you for participating in my research on teaching financial literacy. Below are examples of the kinds of questions and themes that may arise during the interview.

Teaching

I'll ask you to walk me through a particular lesson* you've taught on financial literacy. For example, it could be one that either went particularly well or one that did not go as planned.

Some questions to consider:

- What was the lesson about? (content)
- What did you do? (activities, pedagogical strategies, etc.)
- In what ways was your lesson tied to curriculum expectations?
- What did you hope to accomplish? Why?
- Did you achieve your goals?
- What aspects were a challenge? A success?

*If possible, could you please share this lesson with me (or any materials related to it) by email?

I'll also ask about:

- What financial literacy education means to you
- Your practices, experiences, and beliefs about teaching financial literacy
- The kinds of resources you draw on in your teaching

Directions for Financial Literacy Education

In this section, I'll ask about your opinions regarding the current financial literacy curriculum and how you think it should be taught in the future.

Background and Context

Last, I'll ask some background questions to help me situate your responses in a broader context. These will include how your past professional and personal experiences have informed your teaching. I'll also ask about sources of inspiration for your teaching (books, films, media, etc.).

Appendix G: Sample First Interview Protocol

Hello. My name is Agata. As you know, I am a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa conducting research about financial literacy education. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today; I really appreciate it. Does this time still work for you? (If yes, proceed. If no, ask for an alternative time to call back.)

The interview should take about 45 minutes to an hour, and at times I may move things along to ensure we get through all the questions. The interview is divided into three sections. I'll start with your experiences teaching financial literacy. Then your thoughts about the current curriculum and future directions. And last, I'll ask some background questions.

Before we begin, I'll go over the consent form I sent you.

- Your answers will be confidential—I will not report your name or the name of your school or school district.
- If you do not want to answer any of the questions, just let me know and we will skip the question. You may also withdraw from the study at any time.
- I am planning to audio-record the interview. If you like, I would be happy to provide you with a transcription of the interview so you can check it for accuracy.
- Do I have your consent to contact you again if you are selected for a focus group session?

Do I have your consent to proceed with the audio-recording? [If participant declines, I will type responses as the interview proceeds.]

Today is [date] and I'm speaking with [participant's name]:

Experiences Teaching

1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. What grade and subject do you teach?
3. When during your career as a teacher have you taught financial literacy? In which courses?
4. What does financial literacy mean to you?
5. What kinds of resources do you use in your teaching of financial literacy? Tell me about them (in detail).

6. I'll ask you now to think about a particular lesson you've done on financial literacy (maybe a memorable one that went particularly well or one that did not go as planned), and walk me through it:

Prompts:

- a. Content (What is the lesson about?)
 - b. Pedagogical strategies (What did you do?)
 - c. Ties to curriculum expectations (In what ways was your lesson tied to curriculum expectations?)
 - d. Goals and motivations of the lesson (What did you hope to accomplish? Why?)
 - e. If goals were achieved (Did you achieve your goals?)
 - f. Challenges or successes (What was a challenge? A success?)
 - g. Was this a lesson you developed yourself?
7. What was this experience like for you?
8. How critical do you think you are in your approach to financial literacy?
9. How do you feel about talking about money with your students?
10. How do your students respond to your teaching of financial literacy? Do students ever bring up their own backgrounds, socioeconomic positions, experiences with money, etc.?
11. What is your experience of teaching financial literacy in the particular school or community in which you teach?
12. Thinking more generally now, to what extent do you find the current financial literacy curriculum to be relevant to your students?
13. I'm curious about how you tend to deal with the tension between sharing or not sharing your own views about some of the topics that you teach about (give examples –finances, money, or socioeconomics, inequality, etc.) For example, some teachers say that they do not share their personal or political views with students, while others are more likely to do so. How do you tend to handle this tension?

Directions for financial literacy education

14. What do you think about the ways in which financial literacy education is currently implemented in the Ontario/ Quebec curriculum?
15. How would you describe an ideal financial literacy education curriculum? Why would students need this type of financial literacy education?
16. Who should be responsible for creating financial literacy resources and materials? Why?
17. What kind of resources, supports, or conditions would help you to teach financial literacy in the way you'd like?

Background and context

18. Can you tell me about your academic or professional background as related to financial literacy education? (major, undergraduate or graduate courses, professional development, etc.)
19. What are some sources of inspiration for your lessons on financial literacy and related issues?
20. How do you think about financial literacy education in light of the current social, political, or economic context?
21. Financial literacy is often in the news these days. What do you think about the way it's portrayed in the media? (Why do you think this approach appeals to people?)
22. How do you think your own biography and life experiences relate to how you think about and teach financial literacy?
23. What kind of lessons or stories about money have you heard throughout your life?
24. Can you think of a specific experience in your young adult life that had an impact on your current views and engagement with critical financial literacy?
25. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not covered during this interview?
26. Do you have any questions?

Appendix H: Second Interview Information Letter and Consent Form

Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

Interview Information Letter for Educators

Title of the study: Critical Approaches to Financial Literacy Education in Ontario and Quebec: A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

Name of researchers and contact information:

Researcher:

Agata Soroko
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa
[removed for privacy]

Supervisor:

Lorna McLean
Professor
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa
[removed for privacy]

Invitation to participate: I am invited to participate in a follow-up interview for the abovementioned research study conducted by Agata Soroko and her supervisor, Professor Lorna McLean, at the University of Ottawa. The project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to learn about teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the teaching of financial literacy.

Participation: My participation will consist of taking part in a follow-up interview that will address my thinking about financial literacy education given the recent economic developments and the unfolding recession.

The time needed for the interview is approximately 30 minutes. The interview will take place on the phone or by a video conferencing application at a time convenient for me. My responses will be audio recorded only; the interview **will not** be video recorded.

At my request, I will be emailed the transcript of the interview if I want to clarify or elaborate on my responses.

Risks: My participation in this study entails minimal risks. I may feel uncomfortable discussing my views and personal experiences with financial literacy with someone I do not know. If I do experience any discomfort, the researcher will make every effort to minimize the discomfort such as assuring me that I do not need to answer any questions that I am not comfortable answering. I may decide to stop the interview at any time.

Benefits: My participation in this study will contribute to a greater understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices around financial literacy

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education. It will also allow me to reflect on my own teaching practices and thinking about financial literacy education.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the results of the research will be reported in the researcher's doctoral dissertation and possibly presented at academic conferences and/or published in scholarly journals. However, my anonymity will be protected since any identifiable characteristics such as my name or the school and the school board in which I work will not be indicated in any final report, presentation, or future publication. Finally, while pains will be taken to ensure confidentiality, I understand that email correspondence is potentially not a secure mode of communication.

Conservation of data: The data collected (audio recording of interviews, transcripts, notes, documents) will be kept in a secure manner. Electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer and any hard copies will be kept and locked in a desk/ cabinet at the University of Ottawa. Only Agata Soroko and Professor Lorna McLean will have access to the data. The data will be conserved for ten years following the end of the study and then destroyed.

Voluntary participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed. Additionally, permission from school boards has not been sought for this project.

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Consent Form for Educators

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Agata Soroko from the University of Ottawa.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details, if I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and notes will be taken.
- I agree to participate in the study.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix I: Sample Second Interview Protocol

Thanks for speaking with me again as a follow-up to our previous interviews. Does this time still work for you?

I'll remind you of some of the same background we went over last time:

- Your answers will be confidential—I will not report your name or the name of your school or school district.
- If you do not want to answer any of the questions, just let me know and we will skip the question. You may also withdraw from the study at any time.
- I am planning to audio-record the interview. If you like, I would be happy to provide you with a transcription of the interview so you can check it for accuracy.

Do I have your consent to proceed with the audio-recording? [If participant declines, I will type responses as the interview proceeds.]

Today is [date] and I'm speaking with [participant's name]:

1. What's new since we last spoke?
2. Has anything changed significantly regarding your thinking and teaching of financial literacy since the last time we talked? If so, in what ways?
3. How are you thinking about what's going on in general (pandemic, economic crisis, etc.)? And related to financial literacy education?
4. What do you think about the ways in which the provincial and federal governments have handled the economic crisis, the demands for racial justice, etc.?
5. Has the current economic crisis highlighted anything you were already thinking about or has it provided any new insights regarding your perspective or pedagogy related to financial literacy?
6. Did you teach or discuss anything about the unfolding economic recession to your students this year? Any of the other current events? If so, what did you cover and how did you go about it?
7. How were your students responding to what was going on?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not covered during this interview?

Appendix J: Focus Group Information Letter and Consent Form

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Focus Group Information Letter for Educators

Title of the study: Critical Approaches to Financial Literacy Education in Ontario and Quebec: A Case Study of Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

Name of researchers and contact information:

Researcher:

Agata Soroko
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa
[removed for privacy]

Supervisor:

Lorna McLean
Professor
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa
[removed for privacy]

Invitation to participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Agata Soroko and her supervisor, Professor Lorna McLean, at the University of Ottawa. The project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to learn about teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the teaching of financial literacy.

Participation: My participation will consist of taking part in a focus group session lasting about 60 minutes along with five or six other teachers. During the session, I will enter into a discussion with the participants about my experiences with financial literacy education and my ideas of how it could be taught in the future. The discussion will take place over a videoconferencing application at a time that is convenient for all participants involved. Prior to the session, I will be given a set of possible questions that may arise during the session to allow me to think about some of the topics beforehand. All participants' responses will be audio recorded only; the focus group session will **not** be video recorded.

Risks: My participation in this study entails minimal risks. I may feel uncomfortable discussing my views and personal experiences with financial literacy with others I do not know. I may worry about the reactions of others, and while the researcher will attempt to create a positive environment where all participants are heard and respected, focus group dynamics can be unpredictable and sometimes opinions differ greatly. If I do experience any discomfort, the researcher will make every effort to minimize the discomfort such as assuring me that I do not need to answer any questions that I am not comfortable answering. I may decide to withdraw from the session at any time.

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613-562-5804

1-800-860-8577

613-562-5963

education.uOttawa.ca

145 Jean-Jacques Lussier
Ottawa ON K1N 6N5
Canada



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Benefits: My participation in this study will contribute to a greater understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices around financial literacy education. It will also allow me to reflect on my own teaching practices and thinking about financial literacy education. Finally, the focus group session will give me the opportunity to voice my opinions on the future directions of financial literacy education and connect with other educators to discuss similar experiences and ideas.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the results of the research will be reported in the researcher's doctoral dissertation and possibly presented at academic conferences and/or published in scholarly journals. However, my confidentiality will be protected since any identifiable characteristics such as my name and the name of the other participants in the focus group, as well as the school and the school board in which I work will not be indicated in any final report, presentation, or future publication.

The participants in the focus group may or may not know each other. Nevertheless, I commit to keep the names of the participants and the discussion that takes place confidential. Members of the group will sign a confidentiality agreement to keep their identity and any information learned during the discussion confidential. While the researcher will direct members to keep other participants' identities and identifying characteristics confidential, it is not guaranteed that each participant will do so. Finally, while pains will be taken to ensure confidentiality, I understand that email correspondence is potentially not a secure mode of communication.

Conservation of data: The data collected (audio recording of focus group interviews, transcripts, notes, documents) will be kept in a secure manner. Electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer and any hard copies will be kept and locked in a desk/ cabinet at the University of Ottawa. Only Agata Soroko and Professor Lorna McLean will have access to the data. The data will be conserved for ten years following the end of the study and then destroyed.

Voluntary participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. Due to the collaborative nature of the focus group discussion, however, if I choose to withdraw, it may not be possible to destroy all data gathered until the time of withdrawal and some of this data may be used in analysis. Additionally, permission from school boards has not been sought for this project.

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Consent Form for Educators

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Agata Soroko from the University of Ottawa.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details, if I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time. However, the data that has been collected could possibly be used in data analysis.
- I understand that the focus group discussion will be audio recorded and notes will be taken.
- I agree to participate in the study.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix K: Sample Focus Group Protocol

Thank you again for agreeing to join this focus group. The focus group should take about 60-90 minutes, and at times I may move things along to ensure we get through all the questions.

Before we begin, I'll go over the consent form that everyone has signed.

- Your answers will be confidential—I will not report your name or the name of your school or school district.
- While I've directed members to keep other participants' identities and identifying characteristics confidential and they have signed the consent from agreeing to do this, it is not guaranteed that each participant will do so.
- You may withdraw from the study at any time. However, once we complete this meeting, I will not be able to withdraw the data that has already been collected.
- I am planning to audio-record this meeting.

The researcher discusses expectations, process, and purpose of the deliberative inquiry.

The participants in the group introduce themselves and participate in an icebreaker activity.

The group moves on to discuss the central question of the deliberation:

1. What does it mean to teach financial literacy in a critical way?

Other prompts:

2. There have been many political changes in recent months. How—if at all—has this impacted your teaching of critical financial literacy this year so far (or how may it impact your teaching in the future)?
3. Think about a student you have had in your class last year who you feel has acquired knowledge, understandings, and skills related to critical financial literacy. Can you describe this student?
4. A lot of the teachers in the interviews mentioned feeling like the current financial literacy education curriculum is out of touch with “the real world.” Can you tell us about this?
5. Are there spaces or opportunities that you have to be critical with others, rather than seeing critical teaching just as an individual act?
6. What about spaces for young people to have this opportunity?
7. If I were a curriculum policy maker, what list of topics, skills, or knowledge would you propose to me? Based on this discussion, can we come up with a list?

Appendix L: List of Resources

Type	No.	Resource	Link
Nonfiction books			
	1.	Bigelow, B., & Peterson, B. (Eds.). (2002). <i>Rethinking globalization: Teaching for justice in an unjust world</i> . Rethinking Schools Press.	
	2.	Ferguson, N. (2009). <i>The ascent of money: A financial history of the world</i> . Penguin Books.	https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/302900/the-ascent-of-money-by-niall-ferguson/
	3.	Freire, P. (1970/1996). <i>Pedagogy of the oppressed</i> . Penguin Books.	https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/225/22583/pedagogy-of-the-oppressed/9780241301111.html
	4.	Harari, Y. N. (2015). <i>Sapiens: A brief history of humankind</i> . Penguin Books.	https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/237149/sapiens-by-yuval-noah-harari/9780771038518
	5.	Klein, N. (2017). <i>No is not enough: Resisting the new shock politics and winning the world we need</i> . Alfred A. Knopf Canada.	https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/563379/no-is-not-enough-by-naomi-klein/9780735273993
	6.	Manuel, A., & Derrickson, R. M. (2015). <i>Unsettling Canada: A national wake-up call</i> . Between the Lines.	https://btlbooks.com/book/unsettling-canada

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7. Mason, P. (2016). *Postcapitalism: A guide to our future*. Penguin Books. <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/188/188551/postcapitalism/9780141975290.html>
 8. Mayer, J. (2017). *Dark money: The hidden history of the billionaires behind the rise of the radical right*. Penguin Books. <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/215462/dark-money-by-jane-mayer/>
 9. Mazzucato, M. (2018). *The entrepreneurial state: Debunking public vs. private sector myths*. Penguin Books. <https://marianamazzucato.com/entrepreneurial-state/>
 10. McDonough, W., & Braungart, M. (2002). *Cradle to cradle: Remaking the way we make things*. North Point Press. <https://mcdonough.com/writings/cradle-cradle-remaking-way-make-things/>
 11. Meadows, D. H., Randers, J., & Meadows, D. L. (2004). *The limits to growth: The 30-year update*. Chelsea Green Publishing Company. <https://www.chelseagreen.com/product/limits-to-growth/>
 12. Minieri, J., & Getsos, P. (2007). *Tools for radical democracy: How to organize for power in your community*. Jossey-Bass. <http://toolsforradicaldemocracy.com>
 13. Saul, J. R. (1994). *The doubter's companion: A dictionary of aggressive common sense*. Free Press. <https://www.johnralstonsaul.com/non-fiction-books/the-doubters-companion/>
 14. Stanford, J. (2015). *Economics for everyone: A short guide to the economics of capitalism (2nd ed.)*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. <http://economicsforeveryone.ca>
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15. Stocker, D. (2006). *Maththatmatters: A teacher resource linking math and social justice*. CCPA Education Project. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/maththatmatters1.pdf>
16. Zinn, H. (2015). *A people's history of the United States*. Harper Perennial. (Original work published 1980) <https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062397348/a-peoples-history-of-the-united-states/>
- Fiction and children's books
17. Alger, H. (1880). *Who shall win? A story of school life*. Golden Days for Boys and Girls., 1(1). <https://www.worldcat.org/title/who-shall-win-a-story-of-school-life/oclc/41263871>
18. Cronin, D., & Lewin, B. (2000). *Click, clack, moo: Cows that type*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Click-Clack-Moo-20th-Anniversary-Edition/Doreen-Cronin/A-Click-Clack-Book/9781534463028>
19. Dr. Seuss. (1971). *The Lorax*. Random House. <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/43157/the-lorax-by-dr-seuss/>
20. Mark Twain. (1875). *The story of the good little boy*. <https://washburn.edu/sobu/broach/goodboy.html>
- News articles, magazine articles, and op-eds
21. Coates, T.-N. (2014, June). The Case for Reparations. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>
22. Doherty, B. (2018, March 23). York University students stage occupation to force labour talks. *Toronto Star*. <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/03/23/york-university-students-stage-occupation-to-force-labour-talks.html>
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23. Good, J. (2017, January 15). Happy birthday, iPhone: Let's talk about your dirty environmental secret. *The Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/happy-birthday-iphone-lets-talk-about-your-dirty-environmental-secret/article33626533/>
24. Mojtehdzadeh, S., & Kennedy, B. (2017, September 8). I went undercover in a Toronto factory where a temp worker died. Here's what I found. *Toronto Star*. <https://projects.thestar.com/temp-employment-agencies/>
25. M.S. (2014, May 27). Cutting through the nonsense. *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/democracy-in-america/2014/05/27/cutting-through-the-nonsense>
26. Nicholson, K., & Marcoux, J. (2018, October 31). Pro sports foundations get poor marks from charity watchdog. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/sports-foundations-charity-1.4884705>
27. Couldry, N. (2008). Reality TV, or the secret theater of neoliberalism. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 30(1), 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714410701821255> http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/52405/1/Couldry_Reality_TV_secret_theater_2008.pdf
28. Hulchanski, J. D. (2011). *The three cities within Toronto: Income polarization among Toronto's neighbourhoods, 1970-2005*. Cities Centre, University of Toronto. <http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/curp/tnrn/Three-Cities-Within-Toronto-2010-Final.pdf>
29. Yanklowitz, S. (2015). A rabbi's plea: We need slavery reparations in order to move forward. *Yes! Magazine, Summer*. <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/make-right/2015/06/30/rabbi-s-plea-slavery-reparations>
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Reports and
academic
articles

Documentary
films

30. Achbar, M., & Abbott, J. (2004). *The corporation*. Big Picture Media Corporation. <https://thecorporation.com>
 31. Black, S. (2001). *Life and debt*. New Yorker Films. <https://www.amdoc.org/watch/lifeanddebt/>
 32. Bustnes, H. (2013). *Two raging grannies*. Faction Films. <http://www.tworaginggrannies.com>
 33. Hutchison, P. D., Scott, J. P., & Nyks, K. (2015). *Requiem for the American dream*. PF Pictures. <http://requiemfortheamericandream.com/the-film/>
 34. Lambert, T. (2005). *Guns, germs and steel*. National Geographic Society. <http://www.pbs.org/gunsgermsteel/about/index.html>
 35. Moore, M. (2009). *Capitalism: A love story*. Dog Eat Dog Films. <https://michaelmoore.com/movies/captialism-a-love-story/>
 36. Nash, T. (1995). *Who's counting? Marilyn Waring on sex, lies and global economics*. National Film Board of Canada. https://www.nfb.ca/film/whos_counting/
 37. Pennick, A. (2009). *The ascent of money, Part 1: From bullion to bubbles*. PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/video/the-ascent-of-money-part-1-from-bullion-to-bubbles/>
 38. Reed, K. (2018). *Dark money*. PBS. <https://www.darkmoneyfilm.com>
 39. Wagenhofer, E. (2005). *We feed the world*. Allegro Film. <https://filmsfortheearth.org/en/films/we-feed-the-world>
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Videos

40. Al Jazeera. (2017, April 8). *Robots: Job terminators or simply misunderstood?* [Video file]. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/countingthecost/2017/04/robots-job-terminators-simply-misunderstood-170408083129352.html>
41. Broadbent Institute. (2018, March 22). *Screening of the Ellen Meiksins Wood Prize and Lecture with award-winner Paul Mason* [Video file]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/broadbentinst/videos/1645267038890170/>
42. Clifford, J. (2010, January 15). *Micro 6.3 negative externalities: Econ concepts in 60 seconds-externality* [Video file]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ha-ssoI6S0Q>
43. Clifford, J. (2010, January 15). *Micro 6.4 positive externalities- ACDC econ* [Video file]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvMAec06_Uo
44. Comedy Central UK. (2020, June 1). *Trevor Noah on George Floyd, Amy Cooper & racism in society* [Video file]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb4Bg8mu2aM>
45. Kerr, S. (2015, January 18). *Three minute theory: What is neoliberalism?* [Video file]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzLv3rfnOVw>
46. SWEDESD at Uppsala University. (2019, April 11). *Sustainability talk: Kevin Anderson* [Video file]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JG_wEkSPLyE&t=960s

Animation and infographic videos

47. Broadbent Institute. (2014, December 16). *Wealth inequality in Canada* [Video file]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBkBiv5ZD7s>
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48. Fox, L. (2007, December). *The story of stuff* [Video file]. The Story of Stuff Project. <https://www.storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-stuff/>
49. Fraser, E. (2012, November 7). *Feeding nine billion: The illustrated series* [Video file]. Feeding 9 billion. <https://feeding9billion.com/Videos.htm>
50. politizane. (2012, November 20). *Wealth inequality in America* [Video file]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKKQnijnsM>
51. van Waerebeke, D. (2010, August 25). *How to feed the world?* [Video file]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QloMOOG-bbE>
- Online games, activities, and infographics
52. CIVIX. (2020). *Student budget consultation*. <https://budgetconsultation.ca>
53. McKinney. (2011). Spent [Online game]. Urban Ministries of Durham. <http://playspent.org>
54. Neumann, J., Loeffelholz Dunn, T., Bruce, H., & Copass, C. (2015). Just the facts: A nation built on the back of slavery and racism. *YES!* <http://www.yesmagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/74/74-JTF-8.5x11.pdf>
55. Shiman, D. (1999). *Activity 2 Economic justice: The scramble for wealth and power*. Human Rights Resource Center, University of Minnesota. <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/hreduseries/tb1b/Section2/activity2.html>
56. Whalen, K. (2003, May). *Your coffee dollar* [Frontline World]. <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/guatemala.mexico/coffee2.html>
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Audio

57. CBC Radio. (2018, July 24). *Artificial intelligence, robots and the future of work* [Audio podcast episode]. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/artificial-intelligence-robots-and-the-future-of-work-1.4286200>
58. CBC Radio. (2018, August 31). *Less work and more leisure: Utopian visions and the future of work* [Audio podcast episode]. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/less-work-and-more-leisure-utopian-visions-and-the-future-of-work-1.4306410>
59. CBC Radio. (2018, July 31). *Platform capitalism, digital technology and the future of work* [Audio podcast episode]. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/platform-capitalism-digital-technology-and-the-future-of-work-1.4297369>
60. Franklin, U. M. (1989). *The Real World of Technology* [Lecture audio recording]. CBC Radio. <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/14195315>
61. . Dr. Martin Luther King's 40 acres speech. (n.d.). [Audio]. In *BlogTalkRadio*. <https://www.blogtalkradio.com/thegistoffreedom/2013/10/28/rev-dr-martin-luther-kings-40-acres-speech>

Political manifestos

62. The Leap. (2015). *The leap manifesto: A call for a Canada based on caring for the earth and one another*. <https://leapmanifesto.org/en/resources/>
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Appendix M: List of Analytical Memos

Memo No.	Title	Date
1.	Researcher identity	February 15, 2019
2.	Methodology musings	March 29, 2019
3.	More thinking on methodology	May 8, 2019
4.	Preparing for the interviews	May 24, 2019
5.	The gift card dilemma	May 25, 2019
6.	Neutrality and the critical economic literacy gap	June 4, 2019
7.	Teacher autonomy	June 7, 2019
8.	Politics of the moment and the climate crisis	Jun 10, 2019
9.	The appeal of financial literacy education	June 12, 2019
10.	Translating thinking into practice	June 14, 2019
11.	Critical approaches to criticality	September 23, 2019
12.	Mapping critical financial literacy scholarship and teachers' conceptions of criticality	November 20, 2019
13.	"Privatize the wealth, socialize the cost."	February 12, 2020
14.	"Financial literacy is cruel."	February 14, 2020
15.	"Maybe I teach financial literacy because I hate money."	February 19, 2020
16.	"As an individual you live in a society, so you need to understand impacts of financial decisions on a broader scale."	February 29, 2020
17.	"When you're going to get called upon to vote, you want to actually understand the platform of the different politicians."	March 7, 2020
18.	"Critical would be questioning the status quo, and it would be on behalf of marginalized people."	March 15, 2020
19.	"What we need is an honest narrative."	March 16, 2020
20.	"It's mainly conservative that I'm hearing, but it's also liberal that I'm feeling."	
21.	"Make sure to stick to the facts."	June 24, 2020
22.	"It's like gathering intel."	June 27, 2020
23.	"Teaching financial literacy is white supremacist."	June 20, 2020
24.	"I can't teach a course about finances without getting into the issue of political economy."	July 1, 2020